

ME AS A MODEL

BY

W. R. TITTERTON

16982

*With three illustrations in colour
and thirty-seven in black and white
by EDMUND BLAMPIED*



LONDON

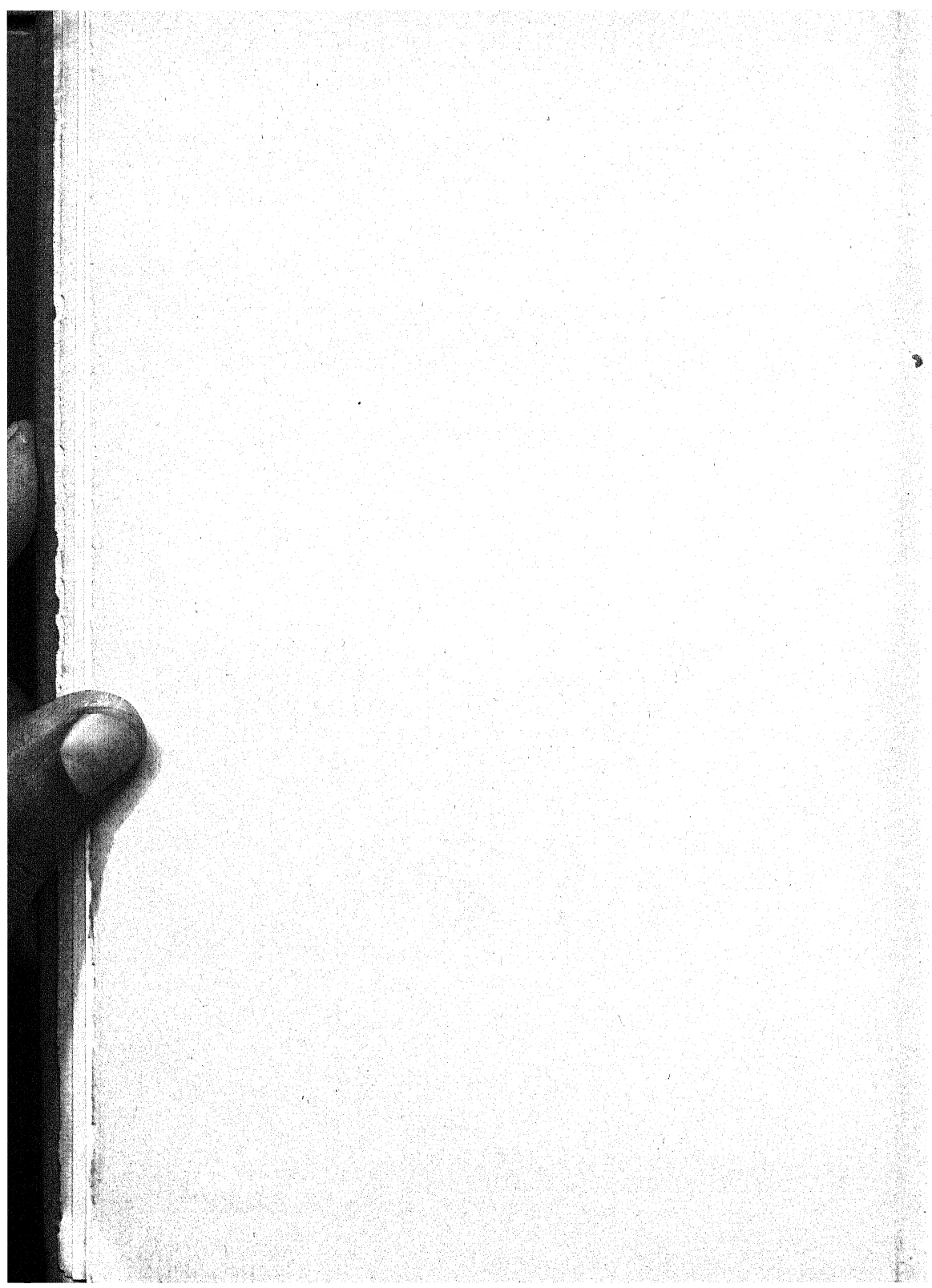
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CONTENTS

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| INTRODUCTION - - - - - | II |
| CHAP. | |
| I. THE MAKING OF A MODEL - - - - - | 16 |
| II. I ARRIVE - - - - - | 22 |
| III. PATIENCE AND A MONUMENT - - - - - | 28 |
| IV. LE SAMI CHEZ SOI - - - - - | 32 |
| V. SETTling DOWN - - - - - | 46 |
| VI. AT JULIAN'S - - - - - | 51 |
| VII. GABRIEL - - - - - | 59 |
| VIII. THE ITALIAN MODEL - - - - - | 64 |
| IX. SONGS FOR JULIAN'S - - - - - | 69 |
| X. MOVING - - - - - | 73 |
| XI. LE RAPIN - - - - - | 79 |
| XII. A WORK GIRL - - - - - | 87 |
| XIII. CARNIVAL - - - - - | 93 |
| XIV. BERTHOLET'S MODEL - - - - - | 101 |
| XV. I LEAVE PARIS - - - - - | 117 |
| XVI. THE THIEVES' KITCHEN OF MELUN - - - - - | 121 |
| XVII. GEORGE GRAY BARNARD - - - - - | 128 |
| XVIII. STOKING - - - - - | 136 |
| XIX. A CHRISTMAS CAMP - - - - - | 141 |
| XX. THE DONKEY WITH THE SPLENDID EYE - - - - - | 150 |
| XXI. AN EXCURSION - - - - - | 154 |
| XXII. THE QUATZARTS BALL - - - - - | 160 |
| XXIII. HANS BIEBERMEYER - - - - - | 166 |
| XXIV. THE OTHER ME - - - - - | 182 |
| EPILOGUE - - - - - | 187 |



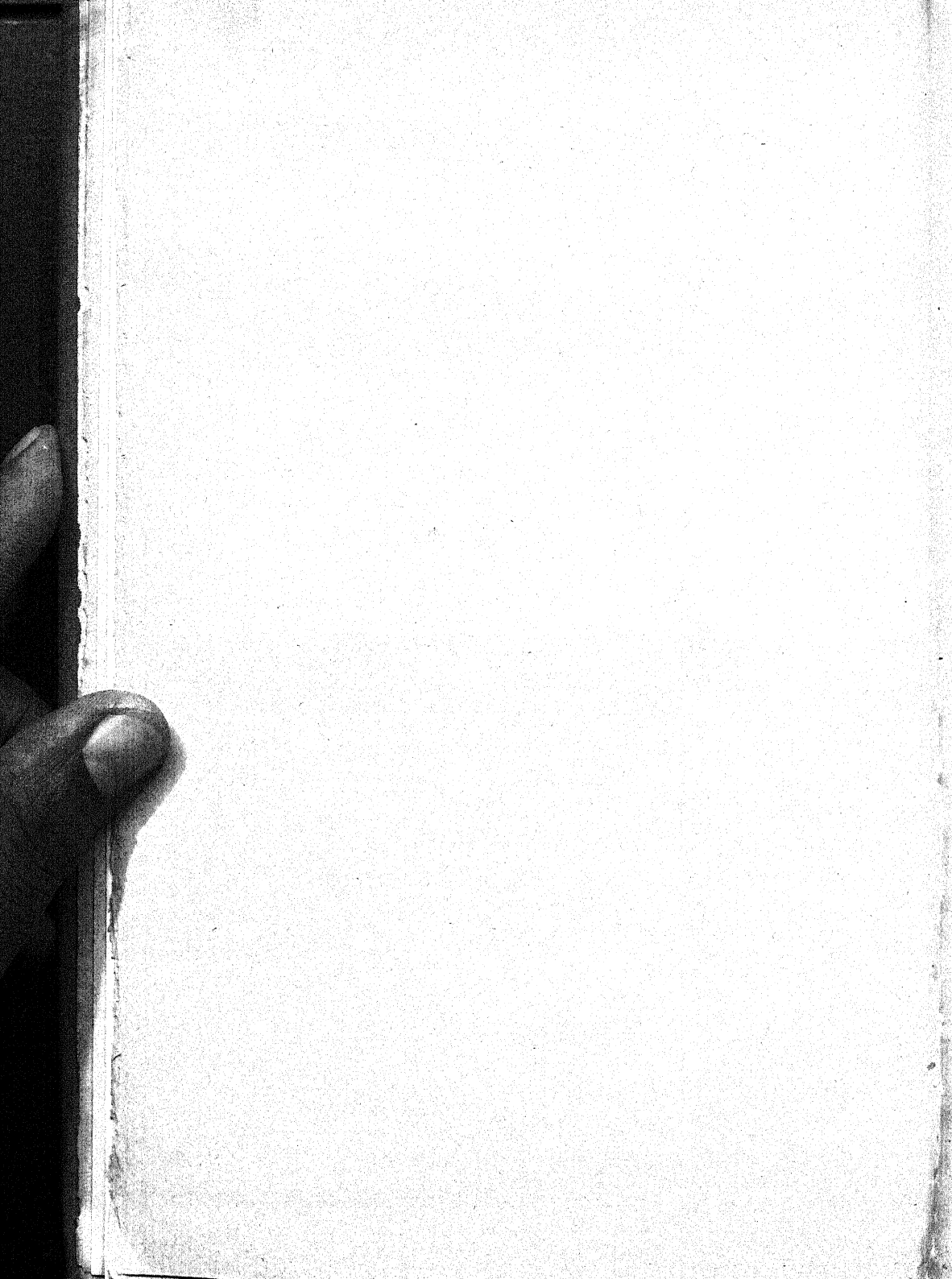
LIST OF FULL PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS

COLOUR.

| | |
|--|----------------------|
| "THE START WAS IN THE HALF-LIGHT—PALE AND SHIVERY" | <i>Frontispiece.</i> |
| | Facing Page |
| "SO WE SAT AND LOOKED AT EACH OTHER" - - - - | 32 |
| "THEY HAVE JUST MADE HIM KISS HER" - - - - | 54 |

BLACK AND WHITE.

| | |
|--|-------------|
| | Facing Page |
| "WITH CARE YOU CAN GET DRUNK FOR FOURPENCE" - - - - | 19 |
| "SO IN A STRAGGLY LINE WE FILED DOWN THE ALLEY" - - - - | 36 |
| "WHAT DOES MADemoisELLE WANT?" - - - - | 56 |
| "SHE LIVES IN A LITTLE HIDDEN GARDEN" - - - - | 80 |
| "HERE SHE VEILS HERSELF" - - - - | 89 |
| "TO SIT ON A BOULEVARD AT CARNIVAL A MAN MUST BE RICH— MONSTROUSLY RICH—AND WITHOUT SOUL" - - - - | 99 |
| "M. BERTHOLET WAS DISCOVERED LYING UPON THE FLOOR OF THE STUDIO WITH A LONG KNIFE DRIVEN INTO HIS BREAST" - - - - | 114 |
| "I UNBUCKLED MY PACK AND THREW IT ON THE BED" - - - - | 122 |
| "MY ANTAGONIST WAS HALF ACROSS THE TABLE WITH A KNIFE IN HIS HAND" - - - - | 126 |
| "IN THE AFTERNOON I HAD A VISITOR—A HUGE, FIERCE MOUS- TACHED MILITARY PERSON" - - - - | 147 |
| "FROM THE CAFÉS WHICH BORDERED MY ROUTE TO THE BEAUX ARTS AROSE GREAT UPROAR" - - - - | 165 |



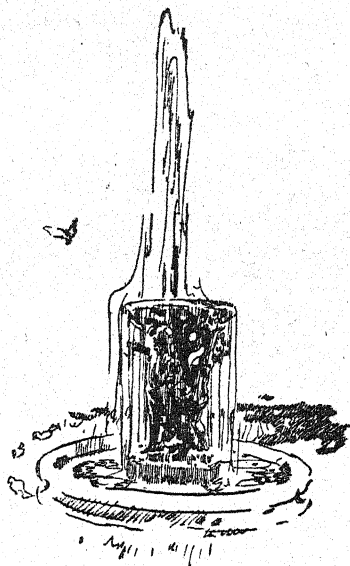
READER,

This book is neither fact nor fiction ; it is the golden mean between them which the conscientious writer must ever seek to find. If you have a lust for autobiographical dissection read no further ! Yet, be assured that had you been in Paris at the time I tell you of, you might well have met there several Samis, several Jennies, several Randalls, several Biebermeyers, several Antoinettes, several Berthollets, unmarred as yet by privy vengeance ! Almost certainly, if you were an artist, you would have met Gabriel, and quite possibly, if you were lucky, you would have met ME. Perhaps the most of us are still there, though when I was last in Paris the Latin Quarter seemed desolate—a place for Cook's tourists and uniformed guides. Perhaps I had forgotten the magic word that bids its secret gates unbar ; perhaps it is a word known only to the young.

W. R. TITTERTON.

INTRODUCTION.

I HAVE detected two tiny buds on the tree that bows to my window-pane, the sun is beginning to warm me a little, the air has a body in it, and coals have gone down a shilling in the ton. I think it is going to be Spring. It is going to be Spring! Do you understand, my fine fellows?

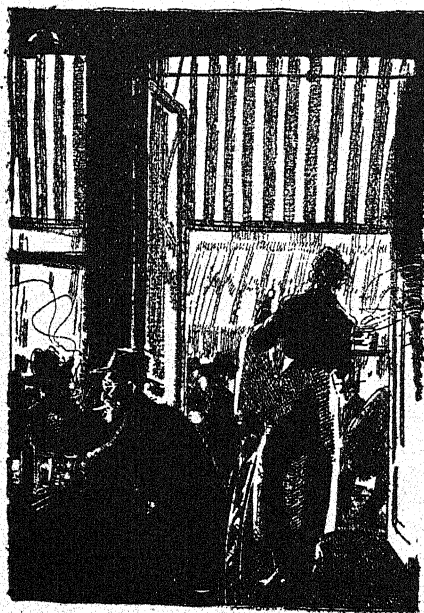


But they, what do they know of the Spring? Those dingy, smoke-dried Cockneys, those creepers in lamp-lit streets—for London is only London when the lights are up. Those lukewarm, prudent clerks, who sit grinding at ledger accounts all the bountiful broadlight hours, and crawl forth timidly blinking when the day is bored and weary, and turns yearning to its rest. What do they know of the Spring?

Oh, Spring-time in Paris! Cool, leafy Paris! Carnival, Mi-carême Paris! Before the air catches fire and the pavement grows white hot, before the tinkle of restaurant glass becomes an irresistible magnet, the shadow of the restaurant seat the only oasis in a burnt-up land! Soon it will be June, and the bubble will be all gone. Life will be flat and stale. We shall stagger

from citron to citron, from café to iced café. Great Celsius, we shall murmur, was the world ever in the Spring? But now! Oh piping birds in the branches! oh laughing crowds in the streets! oh tinkle of glass! oh scent of greenness! oh radiant soft overflow of shadow and light! Oh Spring-time Paris! Oh rainbow sparkle of life and joy!

Did the Spring invent Paris, I wonder? or Paris the Spring? For they are one, body and soul; I cannot think of them apart. Opulent summer, splendid autumn, peaceful winter: Paris will have none of these. "Spring-time or nothing," it cries. "The Spring! the Spring! the Spring!" and cannot be glutted. And then—hey, presto!—Death is looking at you with the eyes out. . . . But fie on me for starting such churchyard spectres in the Spring!



Pledge me! pledge me! glasses together! No, not in wine!—would you have me turn catherine wheels? In coffee, lemonade, water. Already my blood is drunken of the weather. It bubbles like champagne. I am lighter than air. Your hand, and yours! Round with you, round with you! Faster faster we whirl. The Boulevard trees and the stars whirl giddily

with us. Io! Io! Io!
Hark to the sap a-
mounting. It is the
Spring!

* * *

The café proprietors have put out their chairs and little tables under wide awnings all down the boulevard. Will you sit, or will you saunter? Anyhow, there shall be shade, for the boulevard trees are very leafy (just a little twitch of sunshine now and then for a pleasant reminder) and a cool, frivolous breeze blows up from the river.



“Saunter?” you cry. “And where be your mad dances?” Ah, my friend, when one is on fire with life one dare do no more than saunter. It is the brain that leaps and sings. Look at this stolid, violent Anglo-Saxon battling his way through the crowd! Somebody has just told him that the winter is over. He smiles disdainfully at us. We are too tranquil for him—we who walk warily lest we mount up in flame. . . .

Eyes so bright as yours and cheeks so red I never saw, ma belle, but that is no reason why you should put your tongue out at me. . . .

Voilà Antoine, the painter man! Haven’t seen him since Paris buttoned up her overcoat, padlocked her windows, and started shivering. How goes it, Antoine?
“Oh, la la, so so!” And Raffaele, with his locks newly

oiled, and Marcel, with a brand-new beard and velvet coat, and Jeanne and Sami (Bon-jour, Sami !) slouch hat, toque, straw, Breton berri, here come all the bright lizards, that huddled from the cold, crawling above ground again.

The Tritons of L'Observatoire laugh and splash in the fountain, but do you think it is water they spurt from their mouths to-day ?

Hé, Gringoire, how goes it ?—Gringoire of the queer, bulging forehead and staring eyes, sandwich man by day and heroic ballad singer by night for the cabaret he takes his name from. Gringoire grins and hands me a bill. "Entrance free. Exit, 1 franc 35."

Bah ! I am thirsty. And here comes my landlord. Quick, in with you before he sees us ! Here in the shadow of this gentleman here. Voilà, we are eclipsed. Garçon, two coffees ! What does he on the boulevard ? The fat pig

Do you know the Bois de Boulogne, and the cafés under the trees, and the lake, and the branching side-walks, and the stupid charming little rockeries, and the artificial waterfalls ? Do we not know them, ma mie ?

Do you not know those streets of white houses with latticed windows ? Very fresh and virginal they look, but the spring sun just smiles on them, and they blush all rosy colours. See there, through this archway, a courtyard of deep perspective—day shining at the bottom of a well ; and there another and another, with fountains splashing and birds twittering and a white-capped blue-aproned servant girl sweeping the cobbles to a song.

Do you know Butterfly Land ? the Champs Elysées ? a glitter of wheel and glossy, jingling horses and noiseless motor-cars, a flutter of ribbon and lace round pink-and-

white insolent faces that gaze over you and are gone ? (Yet what were that spreading distance of calm, delicate tints without our butterflies ?)

From the Pont des Arts (flat, ugly bridge, but from here it is hidden) we will gaze at the water. See how it laughs in thin ripples ! See how the steamers like little newts dart in to and out from the quays ! One way a vista of bridges (is that pale splendour in the sky the eagle of the Pont Alexandre ?) one way the river dividing and the Pont Neuf and La Cité blocking the view. . . . What, beside the cramp, do those patient fishermen catch, do you think ?

That artist fellow had better have a care of the circling hook, or he will give us our answer. And we, ma mie, if we stop much longer, the artist fellow will have put us in his picture ; though, after all, what does it matter ? He will not paint our portraits. He could not if he would. If you look at his canvas you will find he is quite drunk with colour. We shall only be part of the Spring.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAKING OF A MODEL.

"You have a fine figure," said the sculptor, "and people would come miles to see your back."

I blushed with pleasure—it was my first incense.

A fine figure! A back worthy of pilgrimages! The blood sang in my veins. I wanted to sing—to run—to leap—to catch at the tails of birds and fly with them through the sun-breathed air, crying the brave news unto all men and the more intelligent cattle. A fine figure! A back among backs! Give ear, O ye square-hewn rustics! Harken, O barrel-bodied citizens! Ai, ai!

So I desired, but the means was lacking. In default, I splashed heavily off the bank, and swam across Thames with exultant jerks. The river hissed round my rosy vanity. Emulous water nymphs clipped me in melting embraces, the sun-god smote the back among backs with scorching kisses. "Joy!" hammered my heels on the flying wake. The joy of a man with a turn-up nose and crowded eyeballs hailed as Apollo. Henceforth Whitechapel should find me a duck's back to opprobrious epithets. Monkey Brand indeed! Go to! I have a back.

But artists are conscienceless, and I ought not to have been surprised by the query which met me at the landing-place.

"Say, will you pose for me in Paris?" . . . There was a Torricellian vacuum. . . . Then a gasp of breath. "What?"

He repeated his question, smiling unconsciousness of the stupendous issue—the offer of a choice of destinies.

"How about my office—my leather-bound office—the daily desk—the monthly cheque?"

He, inconsequent: "Such a statue I'll make of you!"

I, persistent:

"And the sexagenarian pension and the semi-detached, with a grass plot. Shall I plunge into chaos from this realm of crystallised realities?"

He, dogmatical:

"The life of the Boulevard is Arabian Nights to this dry goods town."

"The extry-speshuls," I murmured, "the Vegetarian restaurants, Mudie's library, the Cockney accent, the exhilarating rush of things—the moral code."

"The cabaret," he sighed, "is a bubble of strong wine."

"The Flag of Empire," I pleaded, "the Tariff Reform League, the latest scandals, the L.C.C.!"

"Down on the Boule Mich," he sang, "the trees are a rustle of greenness. Down by the Seine in the night there is space and a silence."

"But the British type," I urged, "and the Crystal Palace! And then, and then—they play such bad football."

"O, there's some have long hair, and there's some have short; but in the eyes of all of them is fire."

"We have you on the smells," I said.

This was a staggerer, but he went on bravely:

"The wine of Paris is cheap and good. With care you can get drunk for fourpence."

That took me.

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"WITH CARE YOU CAN GET DRUNK FOR FOURPENCE."

To every man his weakness—mine is thrift. I had always longed for a land where I could get drunk for fourpence. And on wine! I sold my birthright for a bottle of vin rouge.

So I became a model.

* * * * *

Nevertheless, above all other artists was this artist without conscience. Of the Boulevard he had spoken and the cabaret, and the foodstuffs. But, the villain, the black-souled, peripatetic clay-thumper!

He had not spoken of the concierge!

* * * * *

And the concierge is only the husband of the concierge's wife!

* * * * *

Has the reader understood that choice of Destinies? Has he pictured me as I might have been—and as I am? Has he imagined a trim, prim, punctual person, with gold pince-nez and a mincing gait; gloved, chained, and be-spatted, who is strong at tots, and speaks with mild fervour of the Constitution; for whom the first sixty years of life (perhaps all his life's days, even—to speak in a mystery) are a prologue to a pensionate? Yes, this he may imagine, this that I might have been. But he can have no conception of the long-haired, fierce-eyed, casual, fluid vagabond, in Rembrandt hat and beard, velvet coat and balloon continuations, who haunts the café-blazing boulevards of Paris and writes unleavened articles for the daily Press.

Even now he will not believe in him. He will paint me as a gently convivial fellow, who can repeat his Catechism and was once at Boulogne.

Well, my blessings on him! His unbelief is a cloak of anonymity, without which the self-revealing journalist were bare indeed.



And now you want to know all about the wife of the concierge and her husband, and why the sculptor was so evil an one in hiding them within the shadow of his silence. My friend, I cannot tell you here. It would take volumes. I should have to relate the history, to expound the religion, to explain the politics, to illustrate the dress, drinks, manners, and customs of Paris before you would understand the significance of these double-edged watch-dogs (if you will allow the cock-eyed metaphor). This tragic couple stand before the gates of Paris with the finger of silence on the lips and the wink of understanding in the eyes. A solemn business to explain them—not to be undertaken in so trivial a chronicle!

But one or two of their habits will out. To wit—they collect your letters from the facteur, read them,

and give you such of them as it seems right in their eyes. They take a tally of your visitors, and preserve discretion for a consideration. They inspect you through a peephole when you ring for admittance in the small hours. (For Paris is a city without latch-keys. Did you ever realise that the difference between London and Paris is mainly a question of latch-keys?) They thief your every secret, and then show their friends. A woman laughs as you go by in the courtyard. Is it the torn stockings of last week's laundry? or the scented love-letter you carry on your heart?

And worse than that . . . but I cannot tell you short of profanity—and it is time that I took my pose.

CHAPTER II.

I ARRIVE.

You know how I love Paris! Well, this is how I first saw her :

To the young man of artistic tastes Paris is a heaven. He dreams of it as of a place where Art is supreme, and Commerce works to keep the streets clean for her. When he looks upon the ugly buildings of London and its atrocious monuments, when his ears are deafened by the constant shuttle of its business and the blatant cries of its news-vendors, he says in his heart, "Oh yes! In Paris it is otherwise. There it is all pleasant and quiet and beautiful, and the artist walks between long rows of gay cafés." I think he even fancies that no one ever dies in Paris, that there is a sort of immortality conferred on every man who lives inside those ridiculous battlements. Such a young man, I fear, was I, and with such like feelings, I took the night boat from Newhaven to Dieppe, and rattled up to Paris in one of those marvels of inconvenience the French call their trains.

Of course it was night, because the young man of artistic tastes has rarely the money for a day ticket : and night travel has a way of leaving you a bitter pessimist

in the morning. All the limbs are broken, eyes blink, mouth yawns, there is a brackish taste in the mouth; and even if the city of my dreams had appeared to me I do not think I should have loved her. But she did not appear!

The train rattled into the Gare Saint-Lazare, and hideous clamour awoke. I too awoke, and found myself



“THERE ARE FIFTY PORTERS.”

by some subtle process standing with my baggage on the platform, Everything was in hopeless confusion; people and porters screaming and babbling ran hither and thither; it was a nightmare.

The next thing I remember is that I am standing outside the station wondering when all this will stop and the real Paris begin! There are fifty porters round me screaming for my luggage, but with British obstinacy

I have stuck my baggage on the pavement and sat myself on it. Gradually the porters fade away, and I concentrate myself on the landscape.

It all looks so dirty! Beyond the station yard I can see waiters in evening dress and rags of blue apron sweeping up the fragments of the night's debauch, and yawning atrociously. Here and there passes a cab with a cargo of overnight revellers—men crumpled up in a corner with broken shirtfronts, women with dragged hair and faces blotchy with washed-off powder. The streets smell of dirtiness—horrible old creatures (men and women) dig in the heaps of offal that dot the edge of the pavement. From corner to corner untidy gendarmes stroll and yawn.

And is this Paris—the city of my dreams?

I put my luggage in a cloak-room and stroll off yawning along the Boulevard, determined to find out how and how far I have been deceived. Everywhere the same! Everywhere the town looks like an old woman who has powdered and rouged herself overnight, and now lies revealed, worn-out and hideous, in the cold light of the morning.

In desperation I hail a *cocher* and tell him "the Boulevard Saint-Michel." At any rate, the heart of the Latin Quarter should be sound! Oh yes, the heart of the Latin Quarter is sound—sound asleep! Only in one or two of the cafés, as I climb the hill past Saint-Michel and his spouting fountain, I see a long-haired Rapin sourly sipping the final coffee of the night. On! I tell my driver, and we rattle on past the Jardin du Luxembourg. Even the trees of the gardens have a dissipated look, and under the bunches of roof-trees stragglers of night-wretchedness just let in from their wanderings shiver and crouch on the benches.

I have an address, however, the studio of a London acquaintance. I will go there, I tell myself, and seek

an answer to this enigma. I give the *cocher* the direction : he nods his head with a grunt, and whips his horse savagely to a shambling gallop.

We turn round sharply past the Place de l'Observatoire and up the Boulevard Mont Parnasse ; and here is life at last. Here is the artist that I have sought ! Slouching along in huge velvet trousers, voluminous cloak, and soft peaked hat. Bravo ! I cry. At last Paris is discovered ! But when I come nearer and look in his face I find he is American. And here is another and another. Americans throng the Boulevard. Quicker ! I cry, and we drive off into a side street.

The Rue de la Gaité bursts upon me with a rattle and tramp, white-faced workmen and workgirls hurrying past with heavy tread or nervous working elbows. At the entrance of the Bobino an industrious woman in complicated faded garments dispenses huge bowls of coffee and chocolate to ravenous tables full of workmen. Or are they all workmen ? In this café as I pass I notice one of them has a box of paints leaning up against his table-leg.

I pay my *cocher* and get down, sit at a café table, order a breakfast—a bowl of coffee and a basket of crescent breads. I am sick at heart, weary and disappointed ; but here, though the street is filthy, the cafés are flashy and begrimed, yet here is a queer strange vivacity in everything that begins to stir my blasé nerves. Queer ! I say to myself, if after all in the working quarter of Paris the real soul of the frivolous city shall be found.

The waiter who gives me the coffee has been up all night long, and he yawns and stretches himself with delightful abandon.

I get up and stroll off towards my friend's studio. He lives in one of the back streets on the other side of the Avenue de Maine. It looks like a huge factory, a high

blank wall on this side and a glimpse round the corner of a high stretch of glass. The door in the wall is closed. I pull a bell, and after sundry moments of impatient waiting, the door opens of its own accord. I step inside, the door swings to behind me. To the right of me is a little cabin, out of which steps a red-cheeked frowsy woman dressed in a petticoat and bodice of charming frankness. She stares at me through her sleepy eyelids and asks what I want. I murmur bashfully the name of my friend. She says, roughly and shortly, "M 43," and slams the door of her cabin.

There is wall to the left and cabin to the right; so I walk on, and find myself in a courtyard with a disreputable fountain playing faintly, but smelling to the utmost pitch of expectation. All round the courtyard go up huge factory blocks, here window, there blank wall. After inspection of the numbers on the ground floor doors I make the adventure of the staircase—dirty, broken, and crooked, lighted only by faint gleams from the doorway.

A lighted match at last shows me the number I seek. I rap vigorously on the door. A voice from within cries, threateningly but sleepily—

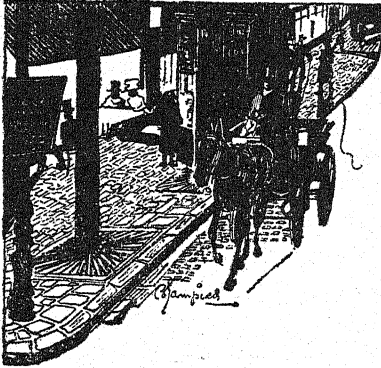
"Qui est ça?"

I give my name. There is a shout of joyful surprise, a tumble and a rush, and the door swings open, letting out a strong smell of paint.

For a moment I know nothing but that I am shaking hands vigorously and asking after my friend's health. Then I become aware that the room is dirty, horribly dirty, that pots and pans and paints and easels and fragments of food and clothes and pictures and washing bowls are scattered broadcast over the floor, that the walls are broken and scrawled over with argot inscriptions. That, as if in a sort of miniature Paris,

here is heaped up all the untidiness and dirt of the metropolis. I sink on a chair and—will you believe me?—I burst into tears!

Happily a leg of the chair gives way, and that saves the situation.



CHAPTER III.

PATIENCE AND A MONUMENT.

"Arm more tense—elbow slightly bent. That is the pose—hold it so!"

I am stretched on a mattress-covered stand of rough wood, four-legged and wheelable; the right hand in the height, gripping nothing; the face turned earthwards, kissing a bolster. Fourteen days, and the stand will hold another clutcher at the empty air, this time a woman—the complement of my pose. In turn the plastic clay will grow to our several shapes. The Salon will know us as marble figures, inseparably joined for the statue's lease of eternity. Perhaps we shall never see each other. If we pass in the streets the eye will have no glance, the body no thrill of recognition. . . . And I have kissed her lips—only it was the bolster.

"Never mind the rest of you—it's the arm and hand I want." The rest of me turns water; the right arm remains at attention, iron from the shoulder.

This glare from the glass roof hurts. I blink. Perhaps the pose changes. Anyhow, the artist is observant—and considerate. He provides me with an eye-guard.

From my pent-house shadow I look wonderingly at this madman, this *exalté*. Now running to the other

end of the atelier to focus the whole picture, now with a spring close to me following the ripple of a muscle; crouching to the ground, up on tip-toe, climbing steps, making mystic sweeps in the air with his sculptor's thumb—eyes never leaving me—those terrible eyes, those eyes that devour. Then at last, with a dart, his hands are on the clay, savagely modelling, and the plastic, sentient clay turns into musical flesh at his compelling touch. Curls at haphazard. The eyes glowing. The lips trembling. The breath hot and quick.

"Oh, not to be too late! To get that impression! That momentary thought of the light on liquid limbs. Quick before the sight leaves me." He hurries to a huge bath of clay, claws a lump, then rushes back to his embryo; moulds, gazes, stoops, springs, runs, till the reluctant eye sees the inexorable clock, and he sighs, "*C'est l'heure*"—It is time.

Then I take my arm down.

It is the first hour, and the pose is not difficult, as poses go, so the arm comes down easily—walks down, you may say. But the second hour! And the third, and the fourth!

Reader, comfortable armchair reader, bilious morning-train reader, have you ever posed? (Except in the way of ethics.) No? But you have had the cramp. Good! For how long? Two minutes—three—four? Then you have stamped on the floor, and hopped round the room in your night-shirt and rubbed and stamped and rubbed and sworn; with the groans of a martyr and the face of Carlyle. Reader, C.A.C. reader, B.M.T. reader, I have had the cramp for thirty minutes on end. For four several half-hours of a frosty morning!

The first minutes are pumpkins. I lie on my back and cast scornery at the clerking of this workaday



world. Till Gravity begins to laugh—and to tug. A very soft laugh, and a very gentle tug. Just enough to make the muscles pride themselves as supporters. Then click! and a ton-weight is at the elbow-joint, trying to wobble, and the muscles hold all the aches of the ages.

The arm must drop! No, this portentous figure of flame forbids it with closed lips. The gallant muscles stiffen to their task. And stiffen. And stiffen. The pain flickers out. All sensation goes. The shoulder holds up something that is not I. Now it changes. Still not I, but mad with desire to be. Then the cramp comes! Oh! (Poor old out-of-date Dante!) . . . Oh! Oh!

It takes five of those delicious ten minutes of rest to bring back the limb to a needle-pricking world. The other five go in contemplation of the torture-chamber.

A flat, glass roof, glass half-way down one wall. Walls of grey, bare plaster, with veins of wood running up from a concrete floor and a litter of boxes and trunks and two wooden-legged bedsteads (three francs new, but usually inherited), and a varnished cupboard that is the table, and a pail with a washing bowl on it, and

a lamp shaded with news paper, and a pot on a spirit-stove, and bottles, and the bath of clay, and cases of drawings, and model-stands, and this growing clay creature hedged in the circling flight of its creator.

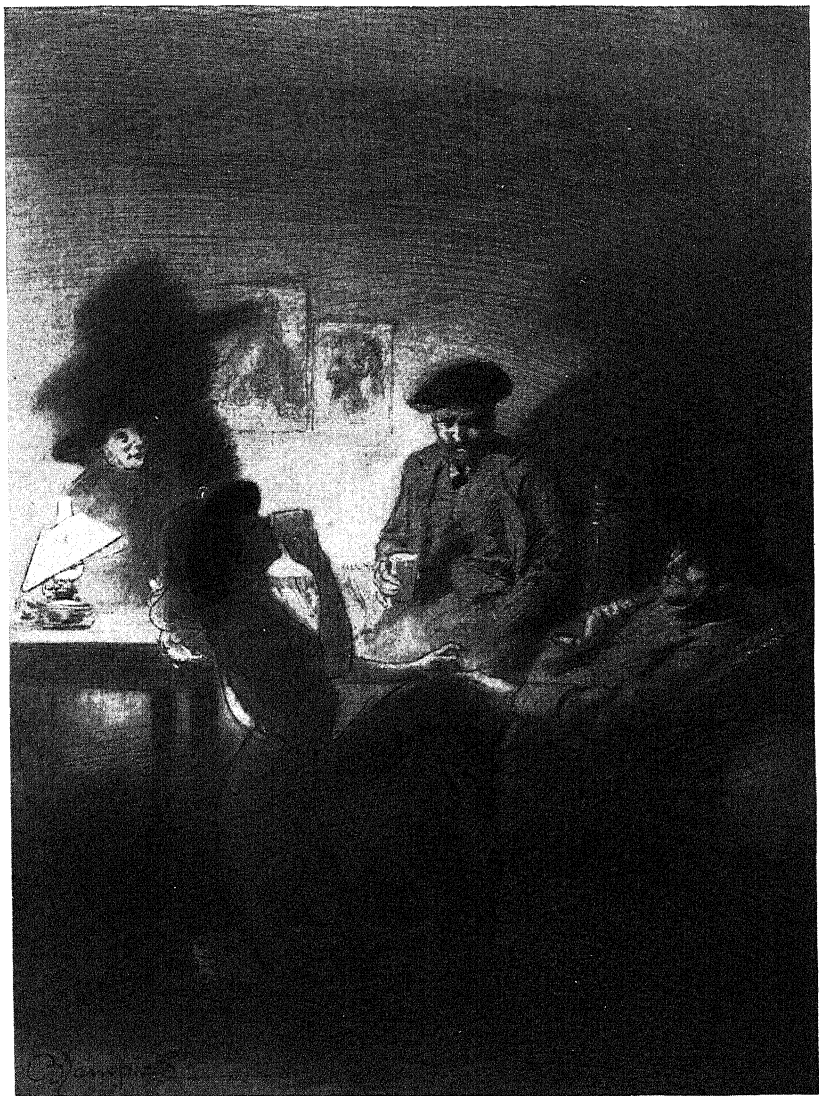
He takes no rest, and the ninth minute finds him eyeing the clock with the eyes of expectation.

CHAPTER IV.

LE SAMI CHEZ SOI.

The first time I ever saw Sami was in the little restaurant in the Rue de Fours. He was sitting at a table in that cosy back room unknown to the vulgar, eating *compot* (*de mirabelle*, I think), in silent company of a girl with short, dark hair, merry black eyes, and a red dress. He bowed politely as Randall did the honours, and looked up at me stealthily with his large, mild eyes.

"Sami Vincent," Randall said he was, splitting the air with his final "t." But that I put down to the eccentricities of American pronunciation. For Sami wore his curled hair down to his shoulders, flaunted a black butterfly tie as big as a blackbird, and was sheathed in a black coat buttoned up to the neck in a way I had never seen till the day before. And on a peg behind him was a huge and high soft black hat. And his face was the face of a baby that has known life—sleepy *naïveté* with an edge of sly enjoyment. "The drowsy Bacchus," I dubbed him, and set him symbolically over the gate of the Quarter. Also he spoke his English with a pretty Parisian accent. I could have foretold that when he finally drew his short legs out of the dilemma of the long deal table and the long deal form he would show, as he did show, a pair of baggy trousers bunched



"SO WE SAT AND LOOKED AT EACH OTHER." (Page 34.)

and banded at the ankle. *Un vrai* type! My heart warmed to him. And the pretty little girl!—that, too, a portion of Bohème complete. I smiled benignantly on her, and she let out a shrill laugh that disclosed a cavern of ruined stumps. La belle Jenny had a glass of wine with me (40 centimes a bottle). I liked her—she was very gay.

It was that night we went to his studio, just off the Lion de Belfort, through a wooden gateway and down a narrow, untidy, paved alley—one side of it stable, the other side hovel, behind a broken-down railing. Beyond the stables on the right were two studios, Sami's and another.

I remember that Jenny and I ran races all the way up the street (what is its name?) that joins L'Observatoire to the Rue St. Jacques, and all the way down the Rue St. Jacques to the defensible door of that stale alley. Every time I caught her she kissed me and shrieked with laughter, and then broke away for another sprint. Sami and Randall plodded sedately in the rear. "Jenny likes you," Sami told me later, "because you are so gay."

So in a straggly line we filed down the alley, eyed furtively by working-women squatting in their doorways.

"Vincent," and "Back in five minutes" were the legends carved into his oak, the latter an optimistic and delusive prophecy designed to prevent drenched models and impatient friends from battering an entrance.

You opened the door with a dungeon key that creaked mightily, thrust with a hand and a foot, and welcomed in your visitors; and, if you were particular, but not if you were Vincent, cast a sharp glance round to see if there was anything compromising to be concealed.

We filed into a dark room pungent with complicated paint smells. Sami lit a match and groped. Presently

he came into view, or his face did, ruddy in the spluttering flare of an obstinate lamp-wick. Then the flame gave over spluttering, and grew into a tall, yellow spike, was regulated, veiled in a broken chimney, and in the surviving half of a gorgeous red paper shade.



"Well, make yourselves at home," said Sami, with a Parisian sweep of his fat hand. But his speech betrayed him. "Make yourselves at home!" Nobody but an Anglo-Saxon would have said that. I became conscious of a sub-flavour of Yankee drawl.

I sat down on a basket-chair that gave an ominous 'crack!' but stood the test, even of a double weight.

Randall balanced himself on the three surviving legs of a four-legged stool. Sami took the bedstead. So we sat, and looked at each other (which is the first thing one does in a Paris studio) and Jenny smoothed my hair. Sami viewed the smoothing with a curious smile of suspended judgment. Randall, lost to the world, was whistling an aria from Beethoven's No. 5.

"Let's have some music," said Randall presently. Sami nodded, and Jenny jumped off my lap with a savage hug and a kiss, and danced to the piano, which now, as Sami put the lamp on the top of it, stood revealed in the corner between the wall and the bedstead. Randall gave up his stool and sat on the bed beside Sami, while Jenny rattled away into a kaleidoscope of French street songs. The voice was harsh and callous, but had that *élan* of careless abandon which is the spirit of the boulevard. Then Randall sang Schubert's "Grenadiers," huskily, but with feeling, and then I sang Gilbert and Sullivan, and then Sami sang his one great song (French, of course), of which I remember only the sonorous conclusion—"dans le brouillard,"—sung with solemn conviction, the arms limp at the side, the legs a little knock-kneed, the face a metre long.

And then Jenny shut up the piano and said we must have tea. Sami made it, the good little man! over the spirit stove, with the very last drop of alcohol, while Jenny found and polished the teapot, the cups, the glasses, and *one spoon*. Cups and glasses were but three (I forget which was in the plural), and so Jenny drank her tea out of my cup, and told me all about the paintings that plastered the wall. Mostly paintings of "Me"—of the back of "me"—"I've not much of a figure now, but the back is still good," which was an obvious echo. "Me as a street singer,"—oh! didn't I know? Yes, she was a street singer (with a proud toss of the head), and had earned her living by it, and the living of at least one of her lovers. "*N'est-ce pas, Sami?*" she asked, jumping on his lap in a sudden fit of tenderness, and pummelling his face with kisses, shrieking all the while in her queer thin falsetto. Sami smiled through it all with chubby complaisance.

* * * * *

The next time I went to see Sami he was hard at work painting—from rough sketches—a picture of Nôtre Dame. We passed the time of day, I criticised his work in the confident manner of the amateur, and then I asked him casually how was Jenny? He didn't know, he said, she'd been off for the last few days.

"Street-singing?"

"No, with Aynsbury, a friend of mine; paints—very well."

"And she will come back?"

"Oh, yes," said Sami, smiling, "she always comes back."

And, indeed, at the word Jenny sprang into the room with a half-pound of *charcuterie*, a bottle of wine and a long spiral twisty loaf of bread; the which delicacies we devoured brotherly together, Jenny and Sami aspirating their meal with kisses, given with unresting gaiety, and taken with a sleepy smile. . . .

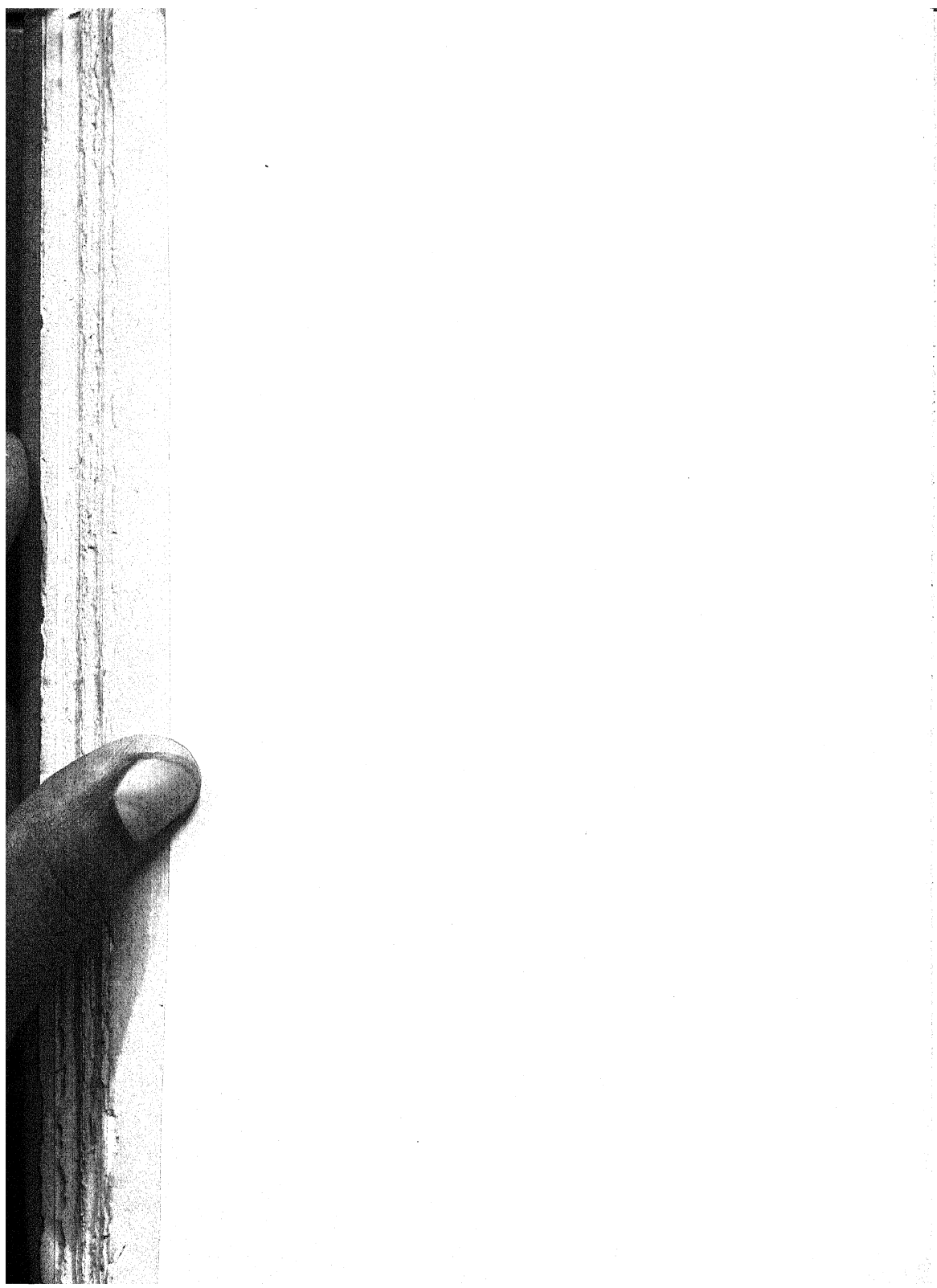
You must not think Sami was always the docile husband waiting at home for the return of his wife-errant. Not he! He was a gallant, roving blade. Often I met him strolling down the Boul' Miche beside a *chic*, high-painted little mademoiselle, the swaggering waddle of his short legs and his heavy, placid manner contrasting oddly with her quick-tripping flutter and her vehement prattle. Sometimes a decorative Rapin, bosky with hair, flanked the lady on the other side. Then we would sit down at a café table on the street, and talk art, while the lady preened her feathers, and examined the landscape. Sometimes I, too, was accompanied, and I found it difficult to escape from the cross-fire of coquetry and badinage. Sami rarely said much; he sat on Olympus top and smiled.

* * * * *

Sami used to come up to my place for beer-drinking.



"SO IN A STRAGGLY LINE WE
FILED DOWN THE ALLEY."
(Page 33.)



We knew a German clerk in a German brewery. Once a week, regular as clockwork, I would find him grinning outside my door, with most preposterously bulging trousers. On entering the studio he would unladen himself boisterously of sundry bottles of Munich beer—even Salvator at certain times and seasons. And then one by one the fellows would drop in.

There were six of us as a rule, Allmann (the brewer), Sami, Randall, two French fellows, and I. Allmann, a jolly, obvious, loud-voiced Teuton, sang German songs as badly as a man can sing and not die, but as the giver of beer he was allowed one song *per séance*, the which he rendered ramping up and down the background of easel space) with much wagging of round, blonde head, and much waving of arms. Randall was all for Schubert, and that we felt was too refined for beer, though he *would* strum him on my hired piano. Sami gave "Dans le brouillard" once a month; the two Frenchmen were not musical, or not willing, and insisted on conversation—a boring thing—while I sang Gilbert and Sullivan until I and the Frenchmen were tired.

Sami, bunched up in a corner of the bed-sofa-divan sipped his beer steadily—he out-distanced us all, the tortoise!—and gloated chubbily over the fun. As he got more and more drunk he got more and more cherubic, and more and more Anglo-Saxon; yet curiously enough, when he was completely fuddled he could speak nothing but French. He never quite lost that look of "the lascivious god peering out of the thicket" one sees so rarely on the faces of men of Anglo-Saxon race.

It seems I had been remiss in my visits to Sami's studio. "Why didn't I go to see Jenny?" he asked me one beer-night. She liked me! . . . Yes, I would come to see them, I promised. No! but when he was out!—this with a licking of curled lips.



It is hard to get rid of the effect of a Puritan upbringing. I confess I had a feeling of disgust; not precisely because of the immorality of the suggestion, but more that such a baby could be so depraved. I shook my head, and helped him and myself to another jampot-full of Allmann's beer.

Often we made a night of it—drank on until song flickered out and conversation died, and my visitors drowsed on deck-chairs and rugs spread on the floor of the studio. A queer

picture we made when the cold, morning light crept through the big north window, and touched our dishevelled hair, our sleep-puffed faces and our tumbled clothes. Of all of us only Sami looked neat and pretty in the morning. Probably when I opened my eyes I would find him straightening his butterfly tie before my broken shred of a mirror.

* * * *

Sami took his holidays in Brittany; the landscape suited his method of painting, he said—like a man who praises the romantic atmosphere of a cheap restaurant; for Brittany is cheap. Two years in succession he went with Jenny, the next year without her. She had disappeared on one of those flyaway excursions of hers. The excursion had lasted much longer than usual, and Sami was looking a very disconsolate widower. But his glances at women had still the old note of the complaisant connoisseur.

Randall and I had a wager—of two francs—on it, would he or would he not come back with a woman on his arm? I won—of course he came back with a woman. But it was a devil of a job getting those two francs out of Randall. In the end he treated me to Pelléas at the Opera Comique; if you know Randall as I do, you will suppose he had a friend in the management.

Yet was the woman on Sami's arm? Is that the right way to put it? Was any woman ever on Sami's arm? Was he not always the pendant, the tendril? He had a wicked eye, and an appealing helplessness—he put his mouth up to be fed and kissed. Some women have a wicked *penchant* for wicked babes.

This fair lady fed him bountifully. He sat in her house (and his house for the nonce) like a puffed pasha wallowing in dainties for the palate and the lips; and playing lazily with a black-eyed little boy that was all madame had left of a fugitive husband. (Or was there some talk of an allowance?)

Sami did not shine in his new environment. All his indolent Roman gluttony came out there. To see him with one arm round his mistress's neck, and the other playing with the curls of her child was a loathsome sight.

But I liked madame—a sharp-nosed, black-browed Parisian, with floods of talk and grim silences, cooking exquisitely, (for our catholic tastes,) eager and quick about the household, neat and clean (never without a spotless white apron on her black silk). Sami became a very doll of a Rapin, and his tie a model for all butterflies. If only he had not waxed so fat under the treatment! And the sight of the fattening Sami made me somewhat doubt madame.

It was a good time for his friends. He was a generous soul, and madame was proud of her cooking. We could

have dined there every day had we chosen. All meat is good that comes to the mouth of a child of the Quartier, in whatsoever temple it has been offered up. So we came and eat gratefully and observed silently—Randall looking a very Sphinx of a big, brown bear, with a smile twinkling under his bushy eyebrows. But we did not come every day; the place was stuffy with the *bric-à-brac* of the departed, and it smelt of lazy sin for all its shining copper.

* * * *

“How long is it going to last?” I asked Sami on one of our rare encounters in his studio—which I had hired.

“As long as *ma belle amie* will have me,” he laughed. “When shall I find so good a cook and so cosy a lodging?” and he looked up at me with naïve artfulness.

There was *that* about Sami, he did not ape sentiment, and even madame knew he was there for the grub. Kisses *au naturel* are so cheap in Paris.

He walked round the room, eyeing his canvasses with critical interest.

Sami did not paint nowadays, but for the sake of his self-respect it was necessary from time to time to feel himself as an artist. He had some knowledge of technique, but no soul and no eye. Dead stuff it was—all of it. The only tolerable things in the place were two etchings by a French friend of his, two heads—of a young girl, and of a shrivelled hag, a toothless horror. “*C’est moi !*” Jenny had shrieked when last I saw her in possession, and had pointed at the etching of the girl, ignoring the fellow-etching pinned up right beside it! I had got a shudder down the backbone and felt sick—with Sami beaming fatly and helplessly from his pasha’s divan. He stopped opposite the etchings now; but I wager he had no spark of recollection of this tragic episode.

"Do you ever see Jenny now?" I asked him.

"Yes," he said, with a crafty look, "I saw her yesterday."

Sami had made a good bargain over the letting of his studio. I paid him three francs a week for it, and he paid his landlord not a penny. What the devil! Had he not settled up for his first quarter like a gentleman—like a bourgeois? And who ever heard of an artist paying his second quarter? So, being genteely domiciled with madame, he sub-let the place to me, and pocketed the proceeds. To do him justice, he several times bought bon-bons for *le petit*.

* * * *

Suddenly one day he began painting again. I found him on the bank of "The Island" doing a laborious study of Nôtre Dame. He knew Nôtre Dame by heart, and was making an auctioneer's catalogue of it. He grinned up at me, as I paused beside his stool. Madame, it appeared, had bought an artist-lover, and did not relish her gentleman-pensioner. He had been sent out to work. He said he enjoyed it. I think he did enjoy it. Sami was made to obey women, and he had a Platonic fondness for the manual labour of art. He was doing, besides, he told me, a portrait study of madame.

"Of the back?" I asked, remembering Jenny.

He grinned broader than ever, and shook his head.

"I thought not," I said, "a woman who cooked like that! Why, she would never have been able to face her frying-pan again without a blush."

Sami made an unpublishable retort.

He was coming to see me, he promised, in a day or two—late at night—to carry off some of his pictures. Madame wanted them in the house, and, after all, the landlord might one day take it into his thick head to organise a sudden descent. He came; next night;

in a borrowed horseman's cloak ; and went away with two discreet armfuls. In a week's time the walls were bare, save for my own poor stuff.

* * * *

A little while after that I got tired of Paris and went tramping. It was six months before I came back—very rosy, very tired and longing very much for company. As soon as I had fixed up a lodging for the night, I went to see Randall. Randall was out—probably painting sunlight and workmen on a Mont Parnasse Boulevard. Then I called on Bertholet. Bertholet was in Nice. I decided to visit Sami *chez madame*.

The *appartement* was in one of those squalid streets of utmost Parnasse that refuse for their souls' sake to be Montrouge. A street of over-ripe De Brie cheeses and *charcuterie*, of shabby *cafés-crêmeries* and stale-smelling wine-shops, of frowsy *hôtels-meublés* and indescribable "second-hand" stores ! Oh, those second-hand stores ! That mingling of dirty petticoats, fragments of laundry, shreds of gaudy stuff, broken-down shoes, faded trousers, crippled furniture, bottles, jam-pots, yatagans, academic studies, hairless paint-brushes, books, curios, birds in cages, cages without birds ! It was a sort of epitome of the street—the dust-bin of Paris ! And, coming, as I was, straight from clean, trim vineyards and self-respecting forests, it turned me over completely. I marvelled how the straight-grown, confident workmen in their wide, velvet trousers, and the bright, spry, bare-headed work-girls could grow in such a polluted soil. Sami now ! Yes ! and madame ?—perhaps ! They were fitting blossoms. I approached the house with some reluctance.

The concierge was sitting at the door of her rabbit-hutch lodge sluicing potatoes. She asked me whom I wanted. I told her.

"*Eh bein !* You will not find her," she grunted, cutting obstinately into her potatoes.

Where should I find her ? She didn't know. Tenants who ran off bag and baggage without paying their rent usually didn't leave an address. She looked up at me with a grumbling scowl.

But it was that pig of a curly-haired doll I was after, without doubt.

I traced in this description some faint hint of the great Sami, and nodded.

"You'll find the little devil in his *atelier* by the Lion de Belfort," she laughed, "and if you see him, tell him not to come round here any more casting eyes at me and praising my *taille*. There are no more *pommes frites*, there is no more *confiture*."

I went down to the old studio, down the alley-way, and stopped before the paint-bespattered door. I knocked ; an "*Entrez !*" came in Sami's voice ; I pushed and entered.

Sami was spread before his coke-stove mournfully boiling water for tea.

"Hello, Smith !" he said, in that patronising *rusé* way of his. "Back from the country ? Have some tea with me ! But you'll have to clean the tea-pot. I am altogether fatigued."

Where was madame ? I asked, as I dropped the old tea-leaves into the pail.

Sami looked at me round the corner, and from his wicked curving baby lips there came a sigh.

"We began to quarrel," he said. "She said I didn't take pains with my painting, I said she didn't take pains with her *bégnets*. One day in the Jardin du Luxembourg we passed Jenny and Aynsbury. Jenny looked at me and smiled ; I smiled back, and madame slapped my face for me. When we got home she sacked me, *sans façon*. I called on her the next day to make it up, and she was gone."

How long ago was that ? About a fortnight. Look what he'd done since then !

I looked round the studio. There were half-a-dozen tolerable canvasses hanging on the wall, and on the easel quite an astonishing full-length portrait of Jenny, as a street-singer with a guitar—a far finer piece than that other he had done of her in the same *rôle*.

"What !" I cried, "Jenny has left Aynsbury !"

"Not exactly," he said, pouring the boiling water into the cracked teapot, "but she comes in a good deal."

It seemed she had pushed at his door a couple of days after the meeting in the Gardens, and had found him lying unwashed and half-dressed on an unmade bed—the room in a devil of a mess. So after she had hugged him and giggled over him, she had set to work, washed, scrubbed and tidied him and the studio, and then bounced into his lap, and hugged and giggled all over again. The whole thing must have been the hugest of jokes to her.

Sami took it all quite calmly, and the incident of her coming the next morning and the next, and the next to pose for hours at a stretch for nothing but a plate of meat and a bottle-full of kisses as the most natural thing in the world.

Why wasn't she here to-day ? Oh, she was off on an expedition with Aynsbury. She had had the cheek to get him—Sami—to buy provisions for them.

I looked at him in silent stupefaction.

"You bought provisions for them ?" I asked.

He nodded. Rather cheeky of her, didn't I think ?

It was as useless arguing a case of morals with Sami as it would be with a baby, or a worm !

Had I got a room ? If not I could come here again and share expenses. Jenny liked me . . . and his eyes twinkled and his lips curled with the old expectancy of interesting complications. "No, thank you," I

said, patting him on the head, "I've taken a room," got up, shook hands and left him.

* * * *

And that was the last I saw of Sami. But I heard of him only the other day. He is over in the States married to a rich American girl, and painting portraits of nobodies at five hundred dollars a time. They say he is getting very fat and virtuous. There was never much of Sami—spiritually or physically; he must have become a regular tub of flesh and morals.

The street-singer picture I told you about hangs now in Sami's reception room in Brooklyn, and is *not* for sale. If Jenny heard of that she would laugh in her queer falsetto. But then she is always laughing—or she was when I knew her.

CHAPTER V.

SETTLING DOWN.

DEAR X :

It is only now, when I have got my first batch of letters from England surrendered to me by a punctilious and dilatory Bureau des Portes, that I realise how firmly fixed I am in Paris. Until now it has seemed the beginning of a very long holiday enlivened with quaint



holiday tasks. This leap into the life of the Latin Quarter was made as light-heartedly and casually as on a former occasion you wot of we leapt from Euston to the Lakes. Though I ranted to you and to others on the width of the gulf I had jumped, until now I had not measured it.

I have read the letters (and I write you this letter) stretched on the mattress-bed which half-fills the gallery of my studio. (The other half is a litter of books and laundry)—a lamp spluttering beside me on the gallery-floor, a couple of male French artists chanting ribald songs in a neighbouring room—Yes! there they are at it again!

The sort of letters I get you may guess. They are all very much like your letter—telling me how things are going on, and saying that you miss me (which I doubt). But three of them are otherwise. There is one man writes to remind me that my cricket subscription is overdue; there is another asks will I deliver a lecture to some earnest enquirers; and there is an impertinent secretary-fellow suggests I might return my library book. These be thrilling letters, X, my boy.

Of course lots of people lecture in France, and I believe there are such things as lending libraries, though I have not struck them. Even cricket, I am told, is indulged in by mad Englishmen who will not drink the wine of the country. Yet, somehow, it is these three more than all my other letters that show me how wide is the gap between me in my studio and you at your desk.

I shall play no more for that cricket club, I shall see those jolly fellows never again—unless as a ghost I revisit the glimpses of your misty moon. Certainly I shall never deliver that lecture on Local Government to the preposterous members of the Minerva Debating Club, certainly I shall nevermore take out books from the office branch of Mudie's Select and Expurgated Library.

Here am I, in corduroy clothes and a butterfly tie that you would scoff at, stretched on an untidy bed in an untidy studio; and there is that prim-collared world, timed to the minute, just about to—yes! to put its

library-book under its decorous arm, sign off, and rush away to play cricket or tennis or chess, or to deliver a lecture, or to slumber over the library-book in a large arm-chair. . . . Or to eat ! (oh ! never let us forget the eating !) to consume vast quantities of badly-cooked provisions with little appetite. I feel, I can assure you, most beautifully unencumbered.

There is a knock at the door.

"Who is it that is there ?" I shout—(Can you hear me ?)

"Is it that monsieur has need of a model ?" a plaintive male voice inquires.

"No !" I thunder.

I hear the knocking grow fainter and fainter as it travels from door to door.

A pleasant item of my day's programme is this rebuffing of models. I have not yet tried how it feels to be rebuffed. But I shall try, X, and I am afraid I shall find it very good fun.

Ah ! here is a gem !—a note from the Income Tax collector announcing that he is impatient, and declaring that if within seven days . . . How mortified the poor chap will feel ! . . .

There is another reason why just now I should be realising my break with Charing Cross and Company. Since my arrival in Paris I have been hard at it posing for a sculptor in a private studio. Now my work there is finished, and on Monday next, at eight o'clock a.m., I am due to pose at Julian's Academy. No doubt you have heard of Julian's. Every Paris student at one time or another works there. I have already shown my figure to the class ; which was a great joke. I will tell you all about it another time. Anyhow, I am to pose there for a week. Then I shall get a week's work somewhere else—in a private studio, or at another academy, then, if I like, I am to return to Julian's, and so the game

will go on. It does seem just like a game. The London grind looks very drab and mechanical by the light of it. Of course, it is hazardous. That is why I am here.

Even now, old thick-head, you may not quite understand. Let's have another shot at it.

I knew the sculptor man beforehand, and my work for him was a sort of holiday sport. (Oh! I said that already!) But here I am taken on by strangers at so much a week in a brand-new trade—and taken on, mark you! with enthusiasm. In fact the boss-student told me they had never seen a model so fine. Picture me blushing to the roots of my carrotty beard! And why have I been taken on? Because I have a knowledge of mathematics?—because I understand local government administration?—because I am skilful in writing reports? (Shut up, you cynic!)

Not a bit of it! For my brain, that had been Me in my London office, the Julian students care not a rap, but *my figure has good lines*, and so they shout Bravo! and give me a job.

You will not credit, perhaps, how I chuckle at this. It gives new values to everything. For the first time I really begin to believe in the equality of man.

And that poor, overworked brain of mine!—how it exults in its long vacation! . . .

* * * *

No, I am not in the least homesick. There is still so much of England in my marrow that I love the feel of my un-English surroundings. My body is still so sick of comfort and regular meals that the hardness of my pallet and the mad dance of my diet are delightful. How long they will be delightful I do not know, and I do not care.

* * * *

Give my respects to Nelson on his monument, and

tell the poor chap I am learning to criticise even the statues of Paris.

* * * *

P.S.—To-night I am for the Bobino, a little music-hall in the Rue de la Gaitié—a very gay and tawdry street between here and the Luxembourg Gardens. Sami and Randall (I told you about them) are to take me there. After that we are going to a night ball. But Sami says the balls are not what they were. Like the *cabarets*, he says, they are quite spoiled by the tourists. The little devil refuses to regard me as anything better than a tourist, for all my butterfly. Yet you should hear me sport Argot!

* * * *

P.P.S.—It was queer—that selection business at Julian's—that standing up, before all those fellows, with nothing on. Like nothing else in life I've ever sampled. At the baths everybody but the attendant is in the same predicament, at the seaside you're part of the landscape, and anyhow you have your Oxford and Cambridge fig-leaf. But here, well, the absence of clothes was conspicuous. You may imagine I blushed. A brick red, I should think. It was very queer.

I've just been thinking about Carlyle's notion of what the world would look like in the buff. And it really won't bear thinking about. I can't remember one of our great contemporaries who would stand the ghost of a chance at Julian's. Of course, with the women it's more or less guess-work, though the latest Summer Fashions give you a fair idea. Night and day I bless the illustrious Tailor who invented clothes. Though perhaps, if he hadn't . . .but why argue?

All of which will prove to you that at the present moment of grace I feel remarkably proud of myself. Alas! my poor X, why don't you take something for that rotundity?

CHAPTER VI.

AT JULIAN'S.

A timid little Cockney artist is walking up and down the street in front of Julian's.

When he has pumped up a good pressure of courage he will announce himself as a new student—a "*nouveau*."

Father Julian's Painting and Sculpture Academy, as all the world on the south side of the river knows, stands in the Rue de Dragon, which is as one goeth from the Boulevard St. Germain.

The "*nouveau*" eyes it with awful respect, his brain repeating like a Paternoster the names of the famous artists who have trodden its stones. At the tail of his list come Bouguereau and Jean Paul Laurens, who still teach at the school what was considered the properest style in art before the Impressionist deluge.

The little Cockney has not got as far as impressionism yet, and he repeats the sonorous syllables with trembling adoration. Then, with less adoration, but more trembling, he thinks of the students, and walks down the street again.

They are fearful creatures, these students, he has heard. Not so bad here as at the "*Beaux Arts*," where a tale floats of freshling artists stripped to the skin and painted in fast colours. But wherever you find him, says the London rumour, the French art student is alarming.

So the little artist finds it is a good half-hour's walk from the corner of the Rue de Dragon to the Academy door-knob.

Which he turns and pushes—and finds himself looking into a glass box that holds a secretary.

"Monsieur is a painter, and wishes to work at the school? Good! With whom will he study? With Jean Paul? Good! Then permit me to show him the way to the *atelier*. It is upstairs!"

They climb a bare, wooden staircase.

"This is the door!"

The freshling flattens his hair and gulps down his tremors, and they enter the room.

A long room, with a window all the way down the north wall, through which streams a flood of serene grey light upon a crowd of artists and easels, clustered round the naked, steadfast model on her stand.

* * * *

For a moment after the door opens there is silence almost. Only a scratching of charcoal, a chance remark, and a sub-conscious whistling.

The next moment the model is posing to empty easels, and Jean Paul's *atelier* is foaming towards the newcomers.

"*Un nouveau! un nouveau! Pour boire! pour boire!*"

The little artist is in the middle of a whirl of grinning, laughing, shouting faces, and a clatter of broken, tumbling syllables.

He does not understand. What does it all mean? Is it a nightmare?

He looks appealingly round for the secretary. The secretary smiles, and points to a quiet spot in the maelstrom.

This the Cockney seizes in drowning desperation, and finds he is shaking hands with the *massier* (a sort of monitor fellow), and is being welcomed, and mulcted of much money.

"Yes, it is the custom to stand drinks. If Monsieur will give him a few francs in addition to his 'mass' fee he will arrange all. They will go out at the next rest."

Meanwhile our "nouveau" sits down shyly on an empty stool, and tries to look at things, and not to fancy that all the artists are making scurrilous remarks about him in their unintelligible *argot*—which they are.

The caricatures on the walls (presumably of former pupils) are wild and unconvincing—the nude studies are dead paint. He turns from them to the girl.

A good figure, well proportioned, delicately modelled, fine lines, a rich transparent colour. Difficult pose, too, for a woman. Right arm over the head, the other on the hip, the weight on the left leg. Her eyes stare vacantly at the opposite wall. There is a touch of pain in the face.

Now a look of interest comes into it, and the Cockney is aware that the *atelier* is singing.



The artists are getting restless. They wish to give the stranger a sample of their quality.

Now they have got up steam, and the model's face has a smile on it.

The song swells louder—with catcalls, croaks, roars, bellows, squeaks, barks, clapped hands, stamped feet, and the clack of brush-handles, strikes a full note of ear-splitting discord—

And stops dead.

"*Voilà le premier mouvement!*" cries a voice in the silence.

Then they roar "*Bis! bis!*" and do it all over again. . . .

"Susanne! Susanne!"

He ventures a look at the door. A tall girl has just come in. She moves with a slight limp. She is dressed in a black-feathered hat and a long, black dress. Her face is pale and powdered. She moves calmly in among the artists, and sits down to talk to one of her fifty friends—who kisses her rapturously, and goes on with his painting.

"*C'est l'heure!*" calls someone, and the room takes it up. But there is no need. The pose falls to pieces at the first breath, and the model steps creakily down to her hiding place.

A bunch of models, three men and two women, wait by the stand, stripped, ready to be voted on.

"Quick!" shouts the *massier*.

A model jumps on to the stand. But the business at the café is too pressing for such elaborate auctioneering. The *massier* pushes the other four on to the platform.

The first man, a splendid young athlete, poses as a wood-chopper without an axe; the second, an Italian boy with long, black curls, a perfect mouth, and blasphemous eyes, as an archer drawing an invisible bow;



"THEY HAVE JUST MADE HIM KISS HER." (Page 55.)

the third, a skinny old fellow, with a huge beard, as a suppliant, with raised arms. The women stand without posing.

It is a weird group—a pathetically funny one. The incongruous attitudes. The faces looking so anxiously for approval.

And yet there is nothing in the world more beautiful. See these long, sweeping curves, these rippling muscles under the firm, smooth skin, this radiant, glowing, divine human flesh!

They are very beautiful, these hireling models, god-like by the side of the insignificant students in tubular clothing, who lounge on their stools, heaving a finger at the good points, like dealers at a horse show, happily numb to the cut of the comparison. Only noticing, perhaps, that one of the women has perilled her divinity by keeping her shoes and stockings on.

"Who wants this one?" says the *massier*, pointing. A forest of hands shoots up. "And this—and this—and this?"

The young man and the booted woman get elected, and have their names booked; while the *atelier* carries the Cockney, smiling and bewildered, to the little *café* on the other side of the Rue de Dragon.

The *gendarme* at the corner of the street soliloquises dreamily: "Either it is a revolt, or the Academy is going to drink coffee with *monsieur* the *restaurateur*. I wonder which!" And then he goes to sleep again.

* * * *

"*Vive l'Angleterre! Vive l'entente cordiale! Vive le plum-pouding!*"

The *nouveau* holds the central chair. Fronting him, and on either side, froth students, intoxicated with coffee. (This is true.) Beside him sits *Mademoiselle* the model. He has his arm round her waist. They have just made him kiss her, and he is blushing, and

feeling very bad, and very bold, and very happy. *Mademoiselle* smiles demurely, and sips at her long flower glass of black coffee.

All the world laughs and bangs on the tables, except one enthusiastic gentleman, who stands on his chair and discourses politics.

Beaming waiters pass incessantly with coffee- and milk-pots and baskets of *petits pains*.

Songs and ribaldry cross and blend in the air.

* * * *

A girl is waiting in the *atelier*.

She is sitting near the door, with her head on her hands, only a wrinkled brow and blue-rimmed eyes showing.

Knots of artists come rushing up the stairs with shouts and rough horseplay, stumble through the doorway, and then fall suddenly silent at the sight of the girl.

"What does mademoiselle want?" one of them asks, with utmost delicacy and politeness.

"To pose," she says, raising her head.

A death's head! Huge hollows under the cheek-bones, purple lips, and those bottomless, blue-rimmed pits below the shrivelled forehead.

"Could she show herself?"

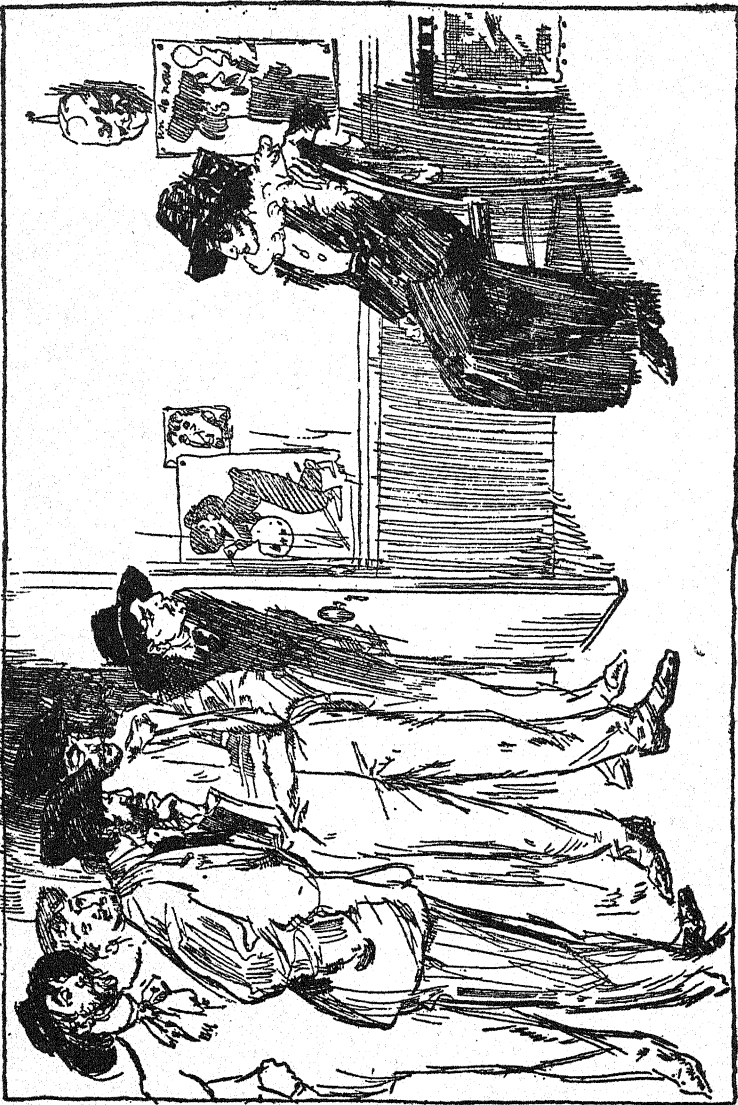
Someone nods.

She undresses, gets on the platform, and stands limply with the hands at the side and the head drooping. Her breasts are mere loose sacks of skin, sagging down over her sunken stomach; the bones almost push out of her knees and elbows; all the skin is grey—a horrible bluish grey.

She stands there for a few minutes, and then gets down.

There is no vote.

While she is dressing behind the curtain, the *massier* goes round with the hat.



“WHAT DOES MADEMOISELLE WANT?”

"No, mademioselle, I don't think we can have you. But you will take this for your trouble."

The girl holds out her hand without raising the eyes, and then slinks away.

"The poor little beast! She has waited too long!" says one with curled locks and swollen pantaloons, dabbing a point of carmine on a comrade's nose.

Whereat the London Rumour starts whispering in our little Cockney's ear again, and he walks downstairs (as slowly as he can make himself walk) to Gabriel, the caretaker, who dispenses colours and canvases for a consideration.

CHAPTER VII.

GABRIEL.

There is a figure floats through my dream in perpetually shifting disguises. Now he wears a peaked cap, with gold and braid, and a manner of condescending courtesy ; now he still has a peaked cap, but of indefinite colour and composition, and a rolling gait that smacks of the shipping office and the narrow seas ; and now he is bare-headed, bare-armed, and girt with a blue-cloth apron, scorched and grimy, and his face is the face of a gargoyle that has been saved by grace, and where his shirt is open at the neck, and all over his corded arms, he bristles with hairiness, and his moustache ! *pardie !* ah, here was a warrior for maidens to adore. And now a halo grows on the tangled locks and blackens, and takes shape and substance, and is a peaked cap, and Esau drapes himself in a natty jacket and has a bundle of red-taped papers under the arm.

Other incarnations there are, but these be the chief landing-stages of my transmigratory friend.

* * * *

Memory is a fickle note-book, and it was long since I had forgotten when and where and how often I had met this inconstant spirit, when I saw the other day the picture postcard, of a lady, in the window of a photographer's shop in the Strand. The picture I just glanced at, no more, but the name beneath it sent an electric current quivering through me ; my phantom

dived up on the screen, and went at the double through the whole of his quick-change turn, went through it a dozen times, and every time too quick for me to tell which mask the name belonged to. And then the change began to be less sudden and less great. The peaked cap and the proper coat and the papers came and went in film-like daylight in a Polar spring. Gradually the features ceased to bubble, and the hairiness on the arms and the blue apron became more apparent, and the moustache! *pardie!* here was a warrior for maidens to adore.

Gabriel! *le voila!* The name sprang at him and ran in letters of fire around his brow.

Of fire? Without doubt, for, see! a ruddy poker is in his hand, and he bends blinking in the glow of the coke-stove's open door.

Gabriel! Gabriel of Julian's! Lord of pencils, easels, drawing-paper, and paint! Good-natured growler, dumb, stubborn tyrant, sweeping us all in and out of the studios with thy cloudy broom! How could I ever forget thee and thy dear ugly head shoved through the doorway with that "*Le professeur, il est là!*" which struck silence into our Babel, and left us cold, sober, and absorbed, but listening in whispers, as it were, for the measured step of Jean Paul upon the stairs.

Forget? Alas! how much had I forgotten! Even now, as I stare at the picture-postcard lady who gave you back to me (but who is not the least like you, Gabriel), I find it difficult to remember much about you. Your face I see—staring savagely through the innocent baby smile, but the tales you told of yourself and the tales they told of you, heigho! scarce a limb of them remains.

Yet we will make an effort; there was some sort of a contract, I think. At the worst, I may remember who you were and whence you came to us.

* * * *

Gabriel was born in the little village of — of —. No—it is no use. Even that all-essential fact I have forgotten. Where is that fragment of grimy manuscript you so carefully confided to me? Where that full and faithful chronicle of the up-springing of your house? Alas! good Gabriel, it is forth, fled, vanished, dissolved. Rests it in my bare-boned *atelier*, not cleaned yet, for a wager, since my two years' gone unobtrusive departure? or was it quashed to pulp and dried to powder on the Rapin Promenade of the Jardin de Luxembourg?—or rests it, perchance, in the pocket of my velvet trousers, left behind, fagged and faded with travel, on the road from Paris to Méhun? Alas! I know not, and no search can make me know.

There is no tracing it, my Gabriel; and you are forth from the Academy *sans* left address to trace you by. I have lost you, you and your genealogical tree, and so, unless you turn writer and annalist, or capture another budding singer, the world at large will never hear of the little village ("crouched in a lump under the hill, m'sieur") that first saw those fierce black eyes and that corrugated nose and the curly hair and the Viking moustache (though that came later, I suppose), nor know who were your father and mother, nor in what trade they cheated the *commune* (though I think they were bakers), nor how many years you roasted the models' backs at the academies (whew! my back beads sweat at the thought of it) nor how the mad student knocked out two front teeth with a flying paint brush, and paid for your battery and your fears of stomachic complications in two great golden pieces—"Two twenty-franc pieces, m'sieur, and a bottle of old wine at the little restaurant in the Carrefour, where the students take their coffee, the little devils!") All gone, Gabriel, save such stray words as lodge in the chinks of my

memory. *A la bonheur!* It is a great loss the English public has suffered.

Nevertheless, here you are immortalised, just as I promised you, and after all, that is the main thing—the village and the anecdotes can take care of themselves—is it not?

You remember how you winked the eye and wagged a wise head when I answered your query of: "And is



it that you are truly a model, m'sieur?" with "Naturally, behold me!" and how you doubted still more when behind the flat palm of secrecy I swore to you by all my gods that I was a spy, an enemy in the camp, a footling journalist, but how, nevertheless, you smiled open-faced and applauded? And how, clinging to the bare chance that I was not utterly a liar, you made your simple plea for immortality:

“ You will put Gabriel in your book, m’sieur ? ”

And how, thereafter, safe in the fact that the Academy paid for the wherewithal, you shovelled a retainer for my gratitude into the fire ? Do you, between gulps at the long and luscious macaroni, sometimes remember ?

Well, Gabriel, genial son of the Nibelungs, swart and stubby, behold yourself with all circumstance put in a book, with a sketch that will not be more unlike you than most sketches are unlike their Gabriels. And you will show it to all the neighbours, to Madame the *locataire*, to Madame the *concierge*, to Monsieur of the third storey, to Mademoiselle Marie of the fifth (*la belle petite* !) and perhaps you will send a copy to Lombardy or Naples, or wherever it was, to the village whose name I have forgotten, crouched in a lump under the hill ; and the baker (a brother of yours, I fancy) will prop it up in his window, and all the village will gape at it, and even the good father will pause and read and smile, and all the world will buy bread and macaroni of the brother of Gabriel, who was written about in a book in far London, where the Marathon was.

But !—perhaps !—if !—only suppose !—oh, Gabriel ! do you read English, Gabriel ? Perhaps not ! since you are not a waiter. And what, oh Gabriel, if you don’t hear of this book ! But that I can hardly imagine.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ITALIAN MODEL.

"C'est l'heure, c'est l'heure!"

The quiet studio suddenly breaks up into a wild foam of easels, artists, and paint-brushes.

The model crawls down from his stand.

In a flash he is dressed. The undressing (it is curious) takes always, oh! so much the longer.

"What, m'sieur! May you have the pleasure of dining with me? Ah! m'sieur, it is with me is the pleasure. Where shall we dine? You are indifferent? Come to my restaurant, then, m'sieur! One gets a very fine *roti-de-bœuf* with macaroni for forty, and a bottle of wine for thirty-five—*pain à discretion*. Bah! for seventy-five a bellyful. Will you come, m'sieur?"

"Naturally."

"En route, then" . . .

The waiter is huge and smiling and curly-haired, and has a voice like—like . . . "the Sirocco in bronze, m'sieur."

He asks what we want, and pats us on the shoulder. "You, too, observe, he pats, m'sieur; he is democrat."

"You will try a *roti*? Good! Felix, two *rotis-de-bœuf* with macaroni. . . . And wine? Yes! Two *chopines* of red wine, Felix."

"*Deux rotis-de-bœuf garnis, deux,*" roars the Sirocco in bronze.

The wine is produced mysteriously, as though our curly giant bore it about him.

"Yes, m'sieur, a farm in Tuscany. I know the farm. I had my eye on it when I came away. That is why



I work so hard. These Italians here are so lazy. Bah! Look at them, how they lie about on the benches of Montparnasse and wait for costume poses—all armchair and slouch hat—to drop on them. And I! I work eight hours a day, truly! and an hour's drawing-class in the evening, sometimes. That tires? At first; but when one learns the dodges—bah! there are no difficult poses. A little change, ever so little, now to the right, now to the left, so that the weight gets shifted. The students can't tell what's wrong with the pose;

there is so small a change. But yet it is all different. What is the matter? You know, but you do not think it advisable to tell them."

And then, oh my model, there is a wicked gleam in your dark, Southern eye.

"Tedious? *Sans doute!* All work is tedious." (You utter this villainous piece of pessimism with an innocent, childish air.) "But there is the little Tuscan farm, m'sieur. That is something worth working for."

True, my friend, you have vista. That is why you do not look so stupid and aimless as your lounging Montparnasse compatriots. But as for your farm, your little Tuscan farm, there (allow me!) I am sceptic. There are so many Italian models in Paris who are saving up for so many little farms that, unless the farms are very small indeed, or Italy is much greater than I had thought her, I don't see how you are going to stow all your little Tuscan farms inside. But at least you have the dream; that is something, my friend. You are no bond-slave of your soulless trade. It is a means you use, and kick away from you. It is a preface to life. Only then will life really begin . . . And your eyes glitter at the thought, and in your ears is the soft, wet slice of the plough.

You look at me benignly. Perhaps you put down my long abstraction to the *roti*, or do you guess I ponder how much will cost me the whole affair?

And now you have rolled and smoked your last cigarette, and drunk your last mouthful of rose-coloured wine and water, grinned and winked at the black-eyed French hostess behind the counter, and are snapping the fingers and looking impatiently at the clock.

"You pose, this afternoon?"

"Yes, m'sieur, in ten minutes."

A lift of the eyebrow, and Felix is beside us.

"Together, messieurs? *Bon! Roti garni deux fois, quatre-vingts. Deux chopines rouges. . . . Un franc cinquante, m'sieur. Merci! m'sieur!*"

He pockets the modest pieces with an Olympian sweep.

"*Bonjour, Felix.*"

"*Bonjour, messieurs.*"

"*Bonjour.*"

My Tuscan friend has vanished with scant adieus. I wander carelessly past St. Sulpice, staring stonily at its chattering market, past the *foyer* where one dines like a lord and pays like a prince, and so on to the prim-faced Luxembourg Gardens and the Rapin parade.

I did not know there was so much hair in the world, and so much pomatum. What pretty pictures they make, Rembrandt *et sa femme* circling to the music of the band round the iron fence, inside which sits the *bourgeoisie* watching the artists pose for them!

But a little tedious one finds it. Everywhere and always is there posing—in, and out of, the art schools! And here they pose for the sheer love of it, with no sort of a notion of a little Tuscan farm to reward them. For these poor fools there is surely no redemption.

So I leave M. and Mlle. *les poseurs* to their posturings, and stroll away under the dolls-house trees, until the Rue Vavin lifts me out of the greenery, and drops me on the Boulevard Montparnasse.

There, on their special bench, at their special corner, they sit, a whole crowd of them: beautiful, useless, wicked-eyed Italians. (And yet, somehow, not so foolish-looking as those peacock Rapins.) Bright earrings, bright rings on the arms, on the fingers, glittering necklaces, gay handkerchiefs—ties, shawls, bodices. A gay splotch of colour they make, dozing and purring in the sun.



Happy they are, in their own small way, lazily laughing and joking: one dropping things down another's back in elegant carelessness, and the other as carelessly (but not so elegantly) cursing; happy in their laziness, happy in their grandeur, happy in their squalor, happy in their forgetfulness. Yes, in their forgetfulness happy above all, for Italy has a history, as I daresay you may remember, and perhaps some of these splotches of colour and dirt have once been Romans.

As I pass they get up in a body and move off down the Rue de la Grand Chaumière, where is Collarossi's Academy. To-day is choosing day—for costume and for the figure. Some one of our family will get a pose, and the rest of us will laze on the proceeds, and roll cigarettes and laugh and chatter, and stretch our yawning arms to the sun.

CHAPTER IX.

SONGS FOR JULIAN'S :

(a) *A moral Preach on Posing.*

When I first went to pose for Père Julian,
(Said I to myself, said I),
I will work on a new and original plan,
(Said I to myself, said I).
I never will cause those poor artists to wait,
So I'll always undress at ten minutes to eight,
And I'll thank them all round if they work me too late,
(Says I to myself, says I).

I will take the most difficult pose I can keep,
(Said I to myself, said I),
That sends all my limbs into paralysed sleep,
(Said I to myself, said I);
A pose that expresses primordial force,
With a Michael Angelical twist in the torse,
That gives you the cramp as a matter of course,
(Says I to myself, says I).

But after much posing, I'm wiser by now,
(Sing I to you all, sing I),
And I always come late till I get in a row,
(Sing I to you all, sing I);
And my poses are easy and classic in taste,
Not a jumble of agonised limbs interlaced;
And I never undress with indecorous haste,
(Sing I to you all, sing I).



Oh Models, dear Models, who list to my song !
 (Which I sing to you all, sing I),
 My practice is wise, if my precepts be wrong,
 (Sing I to you all, sing I).
 And this is the truth that my Lyric shall tell :
 YOU GET VERY SMALL MEDALS FOR POSING TOO WELL,
 So I stand at my ease and send Ethics to . . . Hades
 (I've altered this line on account of the ladies)
 (Sing I to you all, sing I).

* * * * *

But I'm quite another mortal in the private studio,
 For I dread the Open Portal, and the hint that you must
 go.
 Though they give me crooked poses,
 And they make me keep them rigidly,

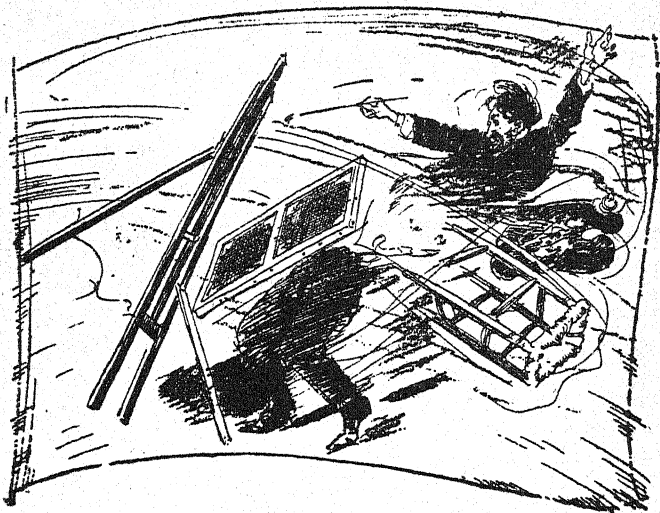
Till I can't tell where my nose is,
And my feet are freezing frigidly,
Though my limbs are all in tangles,
And my backbone's curving spirally,
Though my head's at awkward angles,
And my neck is aching fierily,
I preserve my animation
Till the artist wills cessation,
And I keep an iron fetter
On the language that would flow,
For I find it pays me better
In the private studio.

(b) *Lines Written.*

*On the occasion of the performance by a student at Julian's
of a vocal solo entitled "When the Evening Sun is Sinking."*

When the Evening Sun is sinking
It sets this Model thinking
That there never was a singer like this Swinger of the
Brush.
There's an eloquent outpouring,
There's a rushing and a roaring,
A sort of mingled melody of steam-engine and thrush.

His delivery is curious,
It's timid, and yet furious,
The rushing of the whirlwind, and the whisper of the
breeze.
And the physical effect on me,
You'll easily detect on me,
It's a loosening of the eyeballs, and a quivering at the
knees.



No doubt he means to please us,
 But, *Sacré nom de Cræsus !*
 He would shake the faith of martyrs in the creed that
 they adore;
 And if somebody don't stop him,
 I shall take a stool and drop him,
 With his store of hidden discords, a mute corpse upon
 the floor.

EPITAPH.

O STRANGER READER, drop a tear!
 A painter-poet's buried here.
 Upon this spot he sang and painted,
 Upon this spot his hearers fainted.
 Just here the irate model slew him,
 Right here the well-aimed stool went through him.
 O STRANGER READER spare your strictures—
 Or wait until you've seen his pictures.

CHAPTER X.

MOVING.

The lease of my room would soon be up, and I had determined not to renew it. The studio was all right—well-built, well-lighted, well-ventilated, with a charming gallery for the bedstead, and with quite an appreciable stove. But the studio-block was an American Colony, and the Colonists were always dropping in to talk.

I could never understand how Yankees can have the cheek to vaunt their energy, for they are the laziest race on earth—unless the boundless power of talking sermons be a sign of energy. What indeed has the Yankee ever done except sermonize? He has watched things growing magically in a virgin soil, he has got half-drunk on a magical atmosphere, and he has preached a sermon on the value of hustle. Yet the men from the Far West are of finer stuff, and one day they may justify America, and my poor brave Walt Whitman. Though even the poetry of Whitman, you may remember, has that bad habit of dropping into talk—with as great an ease and frequency as Mr. Silas Wegg dropped into poetry.

I had Americans above and below me, to left and to right, and dropping into talk seemed their staple industry.

Not only was the talk inexhaustible, it was also silly. Even if the American is not the laziest man on earth he is certainly the most sentimental. My Yankee neighbours were typical; they exuded sentiment at every pore. Sami, now, was otherwise, yet even Sami, if you analyse him, was an arrant sentimentalist—though, thank heaven! he did not blether.

There was Johnson—the square-faced sort, with strong nose and chin, twinkling eyes and a solemn flabby expression. He was a somewhat reckless liver (except when modelling his portrait studies) and he was uniformly ecstatic on the virtues of the American home. There was Wilbur E. Smith, a lank, lean, mild-eyed giant from Arkansas, who aimed at landscape-gardening, and was raving silly on Emerson and Thoreau. There was Pope and Morton—two merry young goats up to any sort of fun; yet set them talking, and Martin Tupper was an incident. But Stern was the worst. Stern talked Art, and talked it as though he were addressing the infant class in a Plymouth-Rock-Hard-Shell-Nonconformist Sunday School.

I got no rest by night or by day from their inveterate sociability. I determined to run.

I had, of course, another reason for wishing to quit the Rue Biche, but that is none of your business. At least, I was heartily resolved to find a refuge from America. Yet had I known beforehand the horrors of that search, I think I should not have ventured upon it.

What holes I saw! What broken-down rabbit-hutches, begrimed with ancient dirt! What evil-smelling attics! What ram-shackle draughty outhouses! Anything with a north light was a studio, and cost six francs or more a week. You will understand, I hope, that, though I neither daubed nor modelled, a north light was essential as an outward sign of my inward and

spiritual grace. As a Bohemian of the Quarter I was bound to offer this oblique homage to the sun.

In the end it was Sami who gave me the address—near the Cemetery of Montparnasse—a wineshop with three storeys above it let out in single rooms. On the topmost storey was a vast, pillared hall—one side of it all glass. Outside the window the lead roof of the jutting lower storey made a spacious balcony. There was a real fireplace, and a slip-room large enough to hold a mirror and a handbasin. Altogether, it was a gorgeous place.

The preceding tenant had been a musician, and the plaster walls were scrawled with *motifs*. There was also a decayed easel with stupendous limbs.

The fireplace was in a recess—quite a room in itself, with a bedstead along one wall of it. The bedstead had but three legs, and therefore it was, no doubt, that Beethoven had abandoned it. Yet a box under the fourth corner would make the thing as good as new. I blessed the recklessness of musicians.

A grey and crumpled *concierge* retailed the merits of the room and of the lavatory outside it with particularity, but without enthusiasm. "*Très bon marché pour un peintre*," she concluded, surveying me with a calculating eye.

Back in the wine-shop I signed a paper, and paid twenty-four francs. Whereupon M. le Propriétaire sealed the bargain by treating me to an *aperitif* (in a tumbler) that scorched my throat and brought water into my eyes.

That night I packed my portmanteau, and early next morning I procured and stacked a handbarrow.—You get these barrows from a yard near the Gare Montparnasse at 35 centimes the hour.

The bedstead was to be left behind. It was a good bedstead, and I had sold it to Stern for 2 frs. 50. The

piano was on hire, and the last month's rent not paid, so we did not trouble to move it. This, then, was the tale of the barrow-load :

Two chairs,
One kitchen table (rickety), one whatnot table, inlaid with mother-of-pearl,
One floor rug, one plaited straw mat,
One lamp,
A pail, an enamelled bowl, an iron jug, a saucepan, and a kettle,
One spirit stove,
Four cups, three saucers, two and a half plates, a dish,
A spoon, a knife (with corkscrew),
Sundry bottles and jam jars, most of them empty,
Sundry boxes,
A stack of pictures and prints,
A sheet and two brown blankets,
Two towels,
An alarm clock and
A Packed Portmanteau.

This made a hazardous pile, and Sami and Randall, pushing at the tail-board, had to keep their eyes open. The boys were all in bed—or at Julian's, and so I escaped their smug benedictions. But a chubby hand or two waved petticoats at us from discreetly-opened doors.

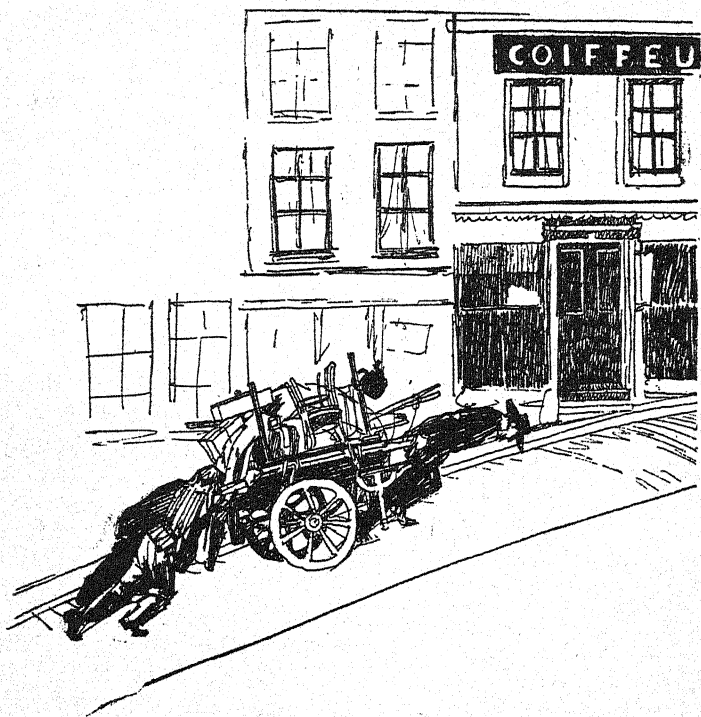
The way was not long, but it was up-hill, and it was lengthened a little by a stupid zig-zag we had to make through side streets to avoid an *epicerie* that had threatened proceedings. By the time we had the lumber strewn on the palace floor we were in good humour for a bottle of Allmann's beer.

"I like this room," said Randall, squat on a box, as he finished his beer, "I shall come up here to paint." He blinked round the studio from under a horizontal palm.

"You'll get your wine at wholesale rates," said Sami.

At which moment there was a knock at the door ! . .

Now if this were a fairy-tale, it would have been a charming young lady who faltered her way into the room in response to my cheery "*Entrez !*" and I should have



found that she lived on the same floor ; and you could have turned up Murger for the continuation. But as this is a true tale, I am bound to confess that it was the *concierge*, who "begged pardon, messieurs for the intrusion, but could we make use of this frying-pan here

she had to sell as a bargain ?"—and with that she gave a look round the room to see how much furniture I had brought in.

I bought the frying-pan—it seemed the prudent thing to do.

* * * *

As a matter of fact, there *was* a charming young lady ; but she lived on the floor below. She sang divinely, and served in the *charcuterie* across the street. Never before or since have I got such weight of *pâté de fois gras* for 35 centimes.

CHAPTER XI.

LE RAPIN.

The London spring is very pitiful—the poor little prisoned shoots of verdure lift timid protests against the city's implacable, unchanging calm; it is so huge and cruel—what more can the green leaves do than babble to the wind incredible tales of a land which is all their own?

But Paris is radiant then; the green things really blossom, the mass of Boulevard branches well-nigh shuts out the blue. You may walk from battlement to battlement with but a few steps out of the shadow, and the sun is a benevolent, temperate fellow with never a hint of his summer madness.

Paris is so sensitive a plant, paling and glowing to every touch of wind or sun. Unlike this insolent giant of ours that lives in stubborn rebellion against the changing year, the winter nips her, freezes the current of her mirth, sends her shuddering to multitudinous wraps and air-tight furnaces; the June sun blasts her, casts her limp and voiceless beneath her shrivelled leaves. The spring runs through her veins like fire.

O, what a gay, laughing crowd fills the pavement! What a clatter of laughing voices overflows from the *café*! The world is drunken with the spring; but so

delicately drunken—it does not rush pell-mell through the streets as it does here in London—drunken here with the lust and sweat of the battle—it saunters, trifling with its inebriety as an epicure with a choice wine. Paris is passion in porcelain, all its reckless mirth is subdued to the daintiness of its material. The air is full of the sound of merry music just done playing, the shifting sun-pictures on the white walls jig to the tune of it, the sound of street crowds has an after-note of laughter, and the voice of the Rapin is heard in the land.

* * * *

I went to Paris to see her artists. Paris was principally interesting to me on account of them. To the book-learned of our island the type was well known. He wore a soft hat (cousin to the sombrero), and a short jacket of peculiar cut, buttoning to the throat; his tie was a black butterfly newly *alit*, with outspread wings; his trousers were velvet and spacious, but dwindling to tightness at the ankles, his locks were flowing, and his looks were wild. He was, be it remarked with discretion, very generous in female addenda. He divided his time between the painting of immortal canvases and the quaffing of unnumbered drinks. Sleep was not provided for in his scheme of things. Now this is an obviously impossible combination of characteristics—but then Paris is the Kew Gardens of impossibilities. The book-learned of the island had no doubts. But I had.

I was born and raised in Poplar, on the shore of the docks, where an artist is understood to be a person who sings sentimental ballads in umbrella skirts and pink tights at the Queen's Music Hall. Only when London broke out into free libraries did I and my fellow East-enders hear of the other conception. It seemed of the two the more improbable. A few of us kept an open mind; which is a very difficult thing for an Englishman to do. So I went to Paris to settle the question.



"SHE LIVES IN A LITTLE HIDDEN GARDEN."

The result of my investigations was curious. I found both the conceptions absolutely wrong. My poor East-ender was hopelessly out of it. Nobody resembling in the least the artist of his imagination walked the Boulevards. At first the alternative theory seemed abundantly confirmed. On the surface, the Rapin answered on all points but one to the description. His looks were not wild. Later I learned that he failed in another important particular. He was not an artist. True, he sometimes flaunted a paint-box, but this was sheer ornament, worn as a part of the costume—as a Minister of State puts on his Court sword, and thanks Heaven it is a dummy and will not draw. It was true, also, that on occasion he carried a canvas; *but I knew where he bought it.*

The visitor gets a cold douche when first he recognises that this gorgeous figure of romance is not an artist, but a clothes-prop, and that the real artist is this quiet, observant man in sober, ordinary garments—a very mechanic, an epitome of prose.

What, then is the *Rapin*? Sometimes he is a son (usually of poor parents) who has come to Paris to study (even art, perhaps), and remained to play. He is sometimes a tourist in search of Life. More often he is a tradesman's apprentice, chrysalis till nightfall, blossoming only at the lighting of the lamps. Sometimes he is pure fool.

You know the old story, repeated in every country, in every profession, since the first day. Once there was an artist who looked like that. He wore workman's trousers, because they were cheap and warm. He wore the closed-up coat to hide the lack of laundry. The butterfly was a casual ribbon, heir to a lost button. The big, soft hat was comfortable and shady. He could not afford to cut his hair. His eyes were wild because he was half mad with genius and hunger.

Then the sentimentalist saw him, and found him picturesque, and imitated the get-up as near as might be. He imitated very well. He failed at the wild eyes for the want of genius and hunger, and he did not work ; otherwise he was really very like the artist.

But times have changed. Perhaps the artist is not so poor as he was ; perhaps he grew tired of being parodied. Anyhow he has put by his weird garments and cut his hair ; and now you only know him from the average man by his trick of observation and a manner that implies he is going somewhere.

Meanwhile the *Rapin* costume, shorn of reality, has evolved in its own sad way, has got neat and unragged, has put on frills and falderals, has bloomed at last into a Mode, a fashion-plate, that knows little of the garret of its birth. The *Rapin* lives to be admired—by himself and others. He struts through the Latin Quarter, the Luxembourg Gardens, the Boul Miche, the Boulevard St. Germain, holding himself up to the universal gaze as a very palpable incarnation of the beautiful.

“Do you notice—do you notice ?” cries his every gesture, “how very artistic I am ?”

He haunts the public balls, the *cabarets*, the theatres of varieties ; he acts in an extravagant manner at all the festivals ; he calls the world to witness what a bold, bad fellow he is, what scarlet sins he can commit—the dear little *bourgeois* that has not the heart for a real live sin ! He plays at life—all is a question of millinery ; he demands apotheosis on the strength of the cast-off clothes of the immortals. He goes daily through his little one-act farce till the tides of Time take him and turn him into a peasant farmer or a seller of tinned meats. Would that our English equivalent were as lucky !

* * * *

And the artist, this disappointing, unattractive, inartistic man goes on working. How he works! He starts at eight in the morning, he stops when the light leaves him. There is surely no other workman, save the scientist, that has his greed for labour. He savagely assaults Nature to make her yield up her secret of beauty. This gay Paris is only his workshop. He is a madman,



possessed by his craft, with no ideal of Life, with no desire but to put into paint and plaster his vision of things. Paris, says he, yes, Paris is a good place for art—models are cheap—so is the food, and the people do not bother. My poor decorative Boulevard, do you feel the sting?

He rises at six, and sleeps at ten, with an occasional theatre. He drinks little—for it spoils the touch. When

he attempts debauch, he does it so clumsily that the *Rapin* laughs at him. He performs miracles of work, piles up canvas upon canvas, statue upon statue, fills the Old, the New, the Autumn Salon, and the rest with the wind of his fame. That is to say, he gets a line or two in the catalogue, and one or two people strolling by his pictures say—"These are pretty." That is all, there are so many artists, you know. And then he takes his pictures home again and the world forgets him. But the Puritan artist goes on working.

* * * *

Am I quite just? Surely not! For instance, there was Antoine! Never was a *Rapin* had finer hat, locks, beard, butterfly tie, corduroys, and sweeping cloak than Antoine. Never a *Rapin* knew better the *cafés* and *cavernes* of Paris, or trifled more assiduously with the French for love. And yet, good Lord! how he worked! From eight in the morning till the light failed him he was hard at it in his studio; hard at it, yet keeping unruffled—keeping all the while that air of mocking, negligent alertness which was his native pose.

He was almost never alone. Commonly he was surrounded by a crowd of painters and literary persons, male and female, chattering with them about all things that crawl or fly between heaven and hell. And, under cover of the light talk, ceaselessly the brush or pencil went to and fro.

Sometimes you found him with a woman model—rarely a professional—sometimes he would not open the door. He told you frankly he always made love to his model; there must be at least the suspicion, the fear, or the hope of love, or his fingers had no fire.

To men he was a friendly foeman; to ladies a polished, cynical gentleman, to "women" an insolent brute. With men that he hated he had the trick of suddenly

emptying his face of all expression, and gazing at them with inhuman, sightless eyes.

His conversation was no great thing, though perhaps alone with a woman he was more eloquent; but his painting was fine. You must have heard of Antoine Tenebre, illuminator of church pieces! In his own immediate circle his other work was even more notorious. He had a boyish weakness for the nude in preposterous attitudes, for frivolous perversities; he tried to shock you in all sorts of ways not worth recording. Yet the only truly shocking thing that hung upon his walls was a picture of Christ that was patently a portrait study of the artist.

He was consumptive; of that he did not boast, and you would never have guessed it from his demeanour; there was nothing of the invalid about him, for even his energy was not feverish. But perhaps his malady explains him; life has great possibilities and great temptations for the doomed man. (As if we were not all of us doomed!)

His weakness was that he wrote; you could hardly imagine a man should write so stupidly, yet paint so well. He had a book of epigrams—Sparkles, he called them,—“The Sparkles of Antoine!”—was never cheap paste-diamond had so poor a sparkle. And under each great utterance he signed his name—a dozen times in a page—“Antoine Tenebre.” ’Tis the old tale! Maybe his Book of Sparkles was the only human thing about him. His capacity for work and his heroic pose were super-human; the rest of him was sheer devil. A great man! and a very dirty pig! A much greater man, and a much dirtier pig than Sami, whose work, for some inexplicable reason, Antoine praised.

CHAPTER XII.

A WORK GIRL.

I had been some time in Paris before I ventured to invade a studio for women. This, or something like it, is what I saw when I ventured :

The white figure on the platform is stirring uneasily, a swift hand breaks from the pose and rubs a cramped muscle. Again and again the eyes seek the laggard hand of the clock.

When will it be time ?

It is the first hour, and as yet there is only a sprinkling of women at the easels. What few there are look very business-like in their holland overalls. The room is dead quiet, nobody chats, nobody whistles. All sit absorbed in their task like so many students in a hospital. In the calm north light the room is more than a workshop, seems cloistral—almost a sanctuary. One would not be surprised to hear singing, to see the door open, and a procession of white-robed nuns file in.

Presently an artist looks up and waves a brush. Before the hand comes to rest again the stand is empty, and the model is moving stiffly through the crowd of easels to her corner. Here she veils herself a little, and forthwith dives into the delights of a flaming ten-centime romance, very bluggy. She reads feverishly ; her fifteen-minutes' rest is all too short for the chapter, and Alphonse has his knife raised, and Eugene is crawling stealthily among the bushes !



"HERE SHE VEILS HERSELF."

"*C'est l'heure !*" She ignores the summons.

" Eugene raised himself to his full height and glared into the eyes of his enemy. At that moment a piercing scream"

"*Modele, posez-vous ! C'est l'heure passée.*"

"*Merde !*"

The model throws down her book pettishly, and undrapes as slowly as she dare.

When she has mounted again to her stand, she is facing a full house. A terrifying sight is this battery of single eyes, firing at her from behind vertical pencils—terrific to the sentimental observer, but nothing to her now; long ago she grew callous to the freeze and scorch of it; but the growing callous must have been bad for her.

With vacant face she looks through the eyes and the pencils at the wall—counts the studies on it, picks out her own figure from the top row, tries to remember whether that pose was easier than this, shifts her foot a little, looks at the frosted window-panes . . . at the clock—a quarter gone, half-an-hour to come—debates what to have for lunch . . . follows the opening and shutting of the door and the entry of somebody—counts the pictures . . . looks at the clock . . . determines not to look at the clock so often, because when one doesn't the time goes quicker . . . has the cramp in the arm and rubs it—looks at the clock—(you are losing your pose, model !)—affects the look of a martyr on the rack—feels uncomfortable everywhere—(ten minutes more)—especially the back of the neck—something in the back of the neck keeps burning her—(seven minutes more)—tries to ease the back of the neck (six minutes)—she must rub it—that's better—(four minutes)—soon be time now and she'll finish the chapter and read how—oh ! her neck, her neck, her neck !—(three minutes)—her neck hurts. Her face contracts into a spasm of pain

—(two minutes—one minute!)—*Time!* “a piercing scream ran through the forest, and Adèle threw herself on the grass before Eugene.” So she forgets her aches for a space, while starved genius discusses learnedly the lines of her body.

And between her and starved genius is a great gulf fixed. These are delicately nurtured ladies, who have moved all their lives between high walls that shut them off from the knowledge of good and evil. The mere vague thought of what this creature must have seen and known disgusts them. Creature she must be—say their cold glances—or how would she dare to show her naked body for a price? (or you to see it, ladies—for a price?) We must have her—our art demands it (and her stomach, mesdames!) and really it doesn't drag her any lower. We wouldn't do it if it did. There's nothing actually wrong about the posing, but you can fancy what kind of girl will offer herself!—and then instinctively they twitch their skirts together, as if a mouse were in question. Just so, honoured ladies, wherefore, having need of such sort of girl, you will pray to heaven to keep up the breed, will you not? lest your stock of models should run low.

But the ladies are wrong. The creature has known and seen very few queer things. She, too, has lived between high walls, out of reach of the knowledge of good and evil, only the way between the walls was a thought more miry and unpleasant than the way of the honourable dames. But no riot, my ladies, no red wild life. A very dun-coloured affair, in fact. And this posing is not an adventure, by any means—just a plain, bread-and-butter business that happens to pay better than shop-assisting, and gives her shorter hours and freedom from the undesirable attentions of a manager. Perhaps that is why she doesn't blush as she ought to (and you ought to, I suppose, mesdames).

Does she look so very devilish and alluring, seated now

again in her faded petticoat, reading her horrific penny romance? If you had the brains to translate the terms, you would find her item for item the same as that little girl who has just broken loose from the governess's shackles, and is crouched in a window-seat over *Alice in Wonderland*, or the French equivalent. If only you had the brains! Wanting which, you stare at her as at a thing unclean, and twitch your skirts a little tighter around your honourable limbs.

Curiously enough the model, just now at the end of a chapter, is thinking too of the way she gets treated, or so I read her reverie and her smile. Next week—say the parted lips—there will be an easy pose, and singing—singing nearly all the time, and jokes, and long rests, and people to talk to, and perhaps a new artist with a general feast of coffee and biscuits in the *café* across the street, and . . . and . . . and . . . ah! how stupid it is that one cannot work always with Messieurs! And the little work-girl, not more than seventeen, I should guess, who has been brought up in a filthy attic on water soup and bread, and small doses of watered wine, sighs as she climbs again to her martyr stand, and casts over the assembled fair a comprehensive look of hatred and contempt.

"My dear," I whisper softly to the clod, "I should like to console you. You know, I suppose, what these ladies think of you? They never say anything, of course, but their faces are so expressive! it must have touched you now and then. Well, I will tell you a fairy-tale, a true fairy-tale. Do you think you can listen with your arm up?"

"There is a goddess. You know what a goddess is like. You posed as one at the *concours*—only that was with a quiver—this one has a harp. And she lives in a little hidden garden close covered up with greenery, very, very near, but so well hidden that only one man in a

million can ever set eyes on her. And there, in her solitary nook, with a little tinkle from her harp, she sings. I cannot tell you the name of her song, it is too difficult; but if you like you may call it 'Beauty.' And, now listen carefully! this is the curious part of it: your body, and the curves of it, and the play of the light over its surfaces, and your little fat fingers with the brass rings, and your coiled black hair stuck through with a jewelled stiletto, and your little coral ear and its pearl drop, and your snub nose, and your pouting baby mouth, and your big, black eyes, and all the mysteries that I can only guess at hidden behind that youthful forehead of yours, all the lot of you, my dear, with ever so many things I have missed out of the catalogue, is a song—one of the countless songs—in the goddess's music book. . . . And just now, listen! she is singing it! Pink! pink! on the harp-strings, and out you pour, note on note. . . . The goddess smiles. Your image grows visible before her. She reaches forward a hand to stroke your side—you are so beautiful!

"Are you not consoled, my dear? Do you not see how fine a thing it is to give the world your beauty? We should never have had an idea of it if you had kept it hidden in that ugly black stuff frock of yours."

But the model does not answer me. She is looking very uncomfortable just now. First she pounces on her elbow and rubs it viciously, then she marks time with her heels and toes. I don't know whether my French is bad, or whether I spoke too low, but my little girl does not seem to have heard my fairy-tale. And perhaps even if she had heard, she wouldn't think much of it. Philosophy is not a sure specific against the pins and needles. . . .

When I treated her, later on, to a coffee at the little *crémèrie* round the corner, we talked of vastly more important things.

CHAPTER XIII.

CARNIVAL.

Once on a time it was the Carnival, the Paris Carnival, cool, leafy Paris of the Spring. Paris of cool breezes and cheap delights, Carnival Paris of foolscaps and confetti-showers rainbow-tinted. Paris of light laughter and joyous madness. Intoxication pirouetting impudently in the face of the fast.

"Once upon a time it was Carnival" . . . and then the Parisian sighs and turns away his head and calls for the waiter.

But you will be more patient, you brown-and-red fellows just back from your three weeks of fresh air and bad food at Brighton or Shanklin, since to you the tale will not bring that savour of bitter recollection which is the after-taste of sweetness. . . .

Once upon a time it was Carnival. And we had no money. Devil a *sou* in pocket or drawer. Never a five *centime* in any of those impossible nooks where wealth is trusted to lurk for such occasion.

Also we were hungry—unreasonably—insistently hungry.

Down in the Boulevard at the end of the street Carnival filled the air; roared, stamped, shouted, shrieked, overflowed in sparkles of song and laughter from the *cafés*, beat in waves of effervescent discord against the walls of our prison house. Yet this was only Carnival at half-pressure, smacking of the outskirts, all but

provincial. Now on the Boulevard des Italiens you should see things!—King Carnival himself, ribald and reckless, drenched with confetti.

Helas! (as the English tourist says) who am I to talk of Boulevards des Italiens?—I who sit with her, my spouse, at the two long sides of an empty table, with the Tragic Muse, veiled and sorrowfully weeping, perched upon the bare board between.

Hunger and the Carnival! Oh the pitiful coincidence!

Rap! rap!

“Come in!”

A queer little man in a pointed paper cap, a mask, a jacket turned inside out, and pantaloons in green and yellow, introduces himself into the room and our acquaintanceship. The Comic Muse, with a suggestion.

Hurrah! Each of us takes a hand and shakes it feverishly. The Tragic Muse vanishes up the chimney.

“You sing,” the C. M. remarks to me, “Gilbert and Sullivan like a Tivoli *prima donna*.”



I bow.

"And you have a Russian shirt."

"True again; but the connection?"

"Empty head! Russia is an ally, dearer now than in more warlike times. And there is an *entente cordiale* with England. A comic opera *Entente Cordiale* that will go splendidly with your songs. You have heard of it?"

I groan.

"I thought so. In fact, there's a week-end *Entente* of archdeacons and organ-grinders just come over for the Carnival."

"And she, my spouse?"

"Will don your velvet suit, and go round with the hat. No, the police won't interfere. It would be as much as their clothes are worth."

(They did, though, which shows you can't depend on a Comic Muse.)

* * * *

The C. M. managed it all his own way. I went forth clad in a yellow Russian shirt, girded over non-committal trousers, and an international slouch hat above my hanging locks. The spouse in velvet, and a face-concealing Panama looked a perfect boy.

* * * *

On the Boulevard the multitudinous drops of paper spurt in huge cascades. The way is packed with man, one huge mass slowly moving. From *café* tables to *café* tables, over roadway and pavement obliterated to one trackless level of many-coloured confetti ankle-deep, stretches the mass of wedged bodies, laughing faces and catapult arms.

We launch ourselves from a side street, and drift past banks of crowded tables under pattering cross-volleys to and from the craft.

To sit on a Boulevard at Carnival a man must be rich—monstrously rich—and without soul. For who

would lounge sucking in absinthe and liqueurs when Life is afoot in the street, afoot in the street and singing? Surely only the *bourgeois* among *bourgeois*, whose bank-book shrinks from the touch of equality! And this is the feast of equality. We who span the Boulevard are brothers (and sisters)—rank and rental are beaten down by our ceaseless fusillades, are trodden under foot with our smirched confetti. . . . Here is a professor, stately and solemn. Splash in his face with your white and blue, and he rises from his baptism, rosy and smiling, hurling paper with the best of us. . . . Starched madam, haughty miss, pompous pater! by the tails upon your skirts, streaming gaily below the rim of consciousness, by this twinkling hailstorm from plebeian hands—I charge you, be as cheeky, as impudent as you will, but cram dignity into an inside pocket, dignity hath an harlequin look to-day; you will make mirth for us in other ways than you would wish to

“*Pardon, m’sieur!*” cry two workgirls with a deluge.

“*Pas de quoi!*” I shout back behind my thunder-bolt.

“*Salut, m’selle!*”—from a sharp-eyed Pierrot. His laugh is snapped short with a mouthful.

But this is only after the singing. At the present moment of my narrative, before its last anachronic jump, we stand, *sans sou*, *sans* confetti, the only mournful specks in the gay crowd; yet with hope insurgent within us, Gilbert and Sullivan in my breast boiling to utterance.

Here, where the chairs and tables recede from the line, is space, she suggests, for the ordeal. No, I implore, not yet!

A singer’s *début* is always tremulous, even with Loki’s footlights, impassable, save by projectiles, to guard him. Judge what it must be when he stands lapped to the neck in auditors!

“Here, then.”
†

"No, not here—the next."

At the third restaurant, shame throws fear on its two shoulders, and I make my bow.

My audience smiles indulgently. The easiest audience in the world for me, could I but know it. If they saw into my empty pockets they might be less appreciative; but you had only to look at me—bah! a student *en fête*, *brava* for his cracked voice, and a shower of ten centime pieces for Madam the boy (unmasked by the just lit lamps) when the song is done!

"What was my song?" asks a fat stockbroker.

"A Russian patriotic ballad, Monsieur!"

He donates.

"The Russian Marseillaise," I tell a working man blazing with red rebellion.

He donates.

My song is English, asserts a well-informed person in spectacles. "An ode to the *Entente Cordiale*, Monsieur."

He donates.

Praise be the Comic Muse! At the end of three restaurants our pockets are bulgent.

Then an unregenerate policeman moves me on—(as a matter of fact, I *had* blocked up the Boulevard)—and I lost heart, and would no more. So we bought confetti.

* * * *

Dash! "*Cochon!*" cries a Sorbonne student. "You have choked my windpipe." My lady darts merrily on, hurling reckless handfuls in the face of the great. A stiff citizen—have at him! A clinking officer—he splutters in a cataract. Into the very eyes of the Law she flings her impudence, for this is Carnival, when the world goes mad, and Law becomes human for a day. . .



"TO SIT ON A BOULEVARD AT CARNIVAL A MAN MUST BE
RICH—MONSTROUSLY RICH—AND WITHOUT SOUL."

It is night now, and faces and arms jump out of darkness into glittering confetti and back again. Suddenly you notice that the crowd is moving without sound of footfall, wading in the paper sea.

"*V'la le Russe !*" thunders a long-haired Rapin. I dip my hand in my sack—empty! "And yours?"—the same. This is the second edition.

As we manage to remember now, we have not yet eaten. We count our remnant in a convenient alley. Two francs—enough, but no more. M. the Carnival, adieu! Without confetti to cover you, you are but the dry bones of joy. We turn up a side street, and pass into solitary darkness.

Soup, fifteen centimes, twice; meat (for her), forty centimes; omelette fines herbes (for me), thirty centimes; compote d'abricots, fifteen centimes, twice; a half bottle of red wine, twenty-five centimes, and fifteen centimes for the waiter—I f. 70 c.—thirty centimes over. What could one do with thirty centimes? Sixty would have purchased confetti and more Carnival. A franc would have given one of us a seat on the Boulevard and a glass of temperance beer. But thirty centimes!

We did the only thing there was to be done. We took coffee in the little shop near St. Germain de Pres—ten centimes a cup, very thick and good, to be drunk at the bar, and a fist-full of beans from the window as we passed out.

To take ten centimes home would have been an anti-climax. We gave the two-sou piece to an attractive mendicant. The coin rattled as he put it in his pocket. But, of course, he may have kept his keys there. . . .

Are you satisfied, Hercules, in boating-flannels? Would you have liked to be there, my Brighton beau? Tumult and laughter and light madness! Never a heavy stop-out! I think you would have spoiled it with your square-toed English manner. You dear, honest,

solemn soul that tries so hard sometimes to be irresponsibly gay! Be happy, if you can. But don't try to be gay, good friend. Gaiety is a French patent, spell it how you will.

And then again, if you listen carefully, perhaps you will detect a note of hysteria in the laughter.

Perhaps it is there, retorts Bertholet, but if it is, so much the better for hysteria.

CHAPTER XIV.

BERTHOLET'S MODEL.

BERTHOLET lived in one of those white-walled, latticed-windowed streets that ray off westwards from the Jardin du Luxembourg. He went to Julian's once or twice a week—never when the professors were likely to call—and stopped there for an hour, dawdling; and once a month or so he had a model in his own elegant studio, and drew all day from eight till six in zealous spurts of forty minutes. He drew well, annoyingly well, and tore up all his sketches. He would work like a tiger at a pose for a while, look up, find one of the immortals glaring at him from the whitewash, laugh, give the paper a rip, crumple it into a ball, throw the ball accurately into the wastepaper basket, sharpen his charcoal, and start again—like a tiger.

I often went to see Bertholet, and then always at four o'clock. He was regularity itself, and his cook made delicious coffee. We three—the model and not the cook, made the third, and Bertholet often deplored the injustice of the arrangement—lounged in armchairs before the open door of the studio, within sight and sound of the fountain playing in the courtyard, sipping the divine fragrant liquor, and discussing Egyptians, superfine, and the charming ironies of life. The model was invariably a lady, and was treated as such, for Bertholet, like all cynics, was an honourable man.

One day I was a quarter of an hour late, and sad with

anticipation of cold coffee ; but I found the door of the studio still closed, and no coffee table outside it. And when Bertholet opened to my knock, he had on a brand-new painter's smock, and held a palette in his hand.

"Come in !" he said in a nervous, jerky way I wasn't used to, took me by the arm and drew me into the studio. "Sit in that armchair and smoke, and look at these Japanese prints, and not a word or a peep—or I paint your face full."

He led me across the room, past the big, padded divan that served as a model stand, wheeled an armchair round so that it faced the wall, and pushed me into it.

"You are not to look round ! You promise ?"
I promised.

"Then you may come out, little one !"

There was a light, girlish laugh, the stand creaked, and I heard an easel being pushed into position. I did so want to look round ! The men of Coventry must have been a very noble, or a very incurious race. Or else Godiva was not a *débutante*.

"No!—straighter ! The head lower ! Bring the other arm right over !" And then for half-an-hour the only sound was the crack of the prints as I turned them.

"Time !" Bertholet's voice sounded very thin and weak. "Now hide yourself quickly, before this *mauvais sujet* here moves his head."

There was another laugh—a delightful one, and a scamper. . . .

"Have I been very disagreeable ?"

Bertholet was sitting on the arm of my chair, drying the tips of his long, thin fingers on a silk handkerchief.

"A regular bear !" I assured him. "And what about my coffee—four hours overdue ?"

"I think you exaggerate ; but the coffee will be here in five minutes. Meanwhile, what have you been doing

with yourself lately? Have you seen the Salon?" He led me ruthlessly into a discussion of the latest extravagances.

There was a cough behind us. Bertholet got up with a smile.

"Ah," he said, "let me introduce you to Mlle. Jeanne. Mademoiselle, this is my friend Smith, an Englishman, unfortunately, but not quite stupid. He likes my sketches, and he adores my coffee."

I stuttered and blushed my compliments. Good God!

I had risen and turned eagerly, drawing down my waistcoat and settling my collar as I did so. And then I raised my eyes to Mlle. Jeanne, and stuttered and blushed. *She was so terribly ugly.*

She was standing before an alcove whose black curtains emphasised cruelly the jagged outline of her face. A gargoyle face—a nightmare! All the lines ran awry and grimaced at you, the charcoal eyebrows ran together, the coarse, black hair came low over the bulging brow.

But the eyes held you. They were not beautiful eyes, they were great, terrible, scornful eyes. They were black lamps, they were flames. They questioned, and scorched you. Yet they did not hide, but rather made more obvious the wild grotesqueness of the face.

The girl seemed to know how I felt, yet she seemed not to care. For, queerest of all, there was over this fierce ugliness a veil of intense joy. The great eyes and the swart, crooked features scowled through the veil. I stood like a dummy, staring.

Bartholet's calm voice brought me back to realities.

"Mademoiselle has done me the honour to pose for a picture I intend to exhibit at the Salon."

"*Blagueur!* You will be refused!"

"I think not. Eh, Mademoiselle Jeanne?"

He spoke with a tenderness his voice did not often know, and she looked up at him with a gratified smile as if it were she had been praised. The smile would have told me everything had she been beautiful, and Bertholet a rake. As it was

"And you will show me the picture?"

I had looked at the easel, and the easel was bare.

"No! You will see it on the line. Until then no one shall see it but myself."

There was a knock at the door. He opened it and disclosed the retreating back of the cook and a little table in the porch set with coffee things.

"And Mademoiselle?" I continued.

"Will never see it. It is her wish."

I looked at her as we walked towards the porch. She nodded gravely.

"And nobody" he went on, "but you and the cook will ever know she has been my model. Two lumps? Draw some chairs up."

"One, thanks!" . . .

"You interest me enormously," I went on, as we sat in the coolness of the courtyard where the soft humid breath of the fountain blew past us.

"My dear friend," said Bertholet, "you will not succeed in pumping me, and you will spoil the flavour of these very tolerable cigarettes. Let us rather consider the *æroplane*, and whether or no it will make of France the mistress of the earth."

"Now, if you had said *Paris*," I murmured.

He shot a vicious glance at me. I hadn't meant it so; but it was certainly a tactless thing to say. Mademoiselle Jeanne did not seem to notice.

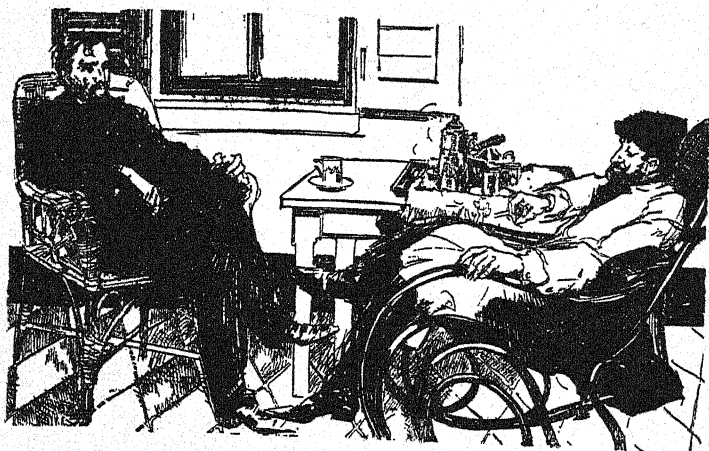
* * * *

When the girl had gone I went for Bertholet again. What the devil was he up to? What did it mean? What was he doing with the girl?

He rose abruptly, walked down to the fountain, stood looking at it for a full minute, turned as abruptly, walked back to his chair, plumped himself down in it, and lit a cigarette.

Then, leaning back, and looking at me through half-closed eyelids, as though he were about to paint my portrait, he began talking in his usual dispassionate style.

"Yes, you shall hear," he said, "though if I thought



it would tickle you not a word would I utter. But the story is so quite without touch of the piquant you love so, you island pigs you! Not a breath! I beg, or *Je tais la gueule*.

"To begin with, she is my mistress. I present you gratis with that delicious piece of information. When you have digested it we can get on with the story.

"Jeanne is the daughter of a thief in a good way of business—burglary and the like. Jeanne has grown up in the firm, understanding, and not understanding,

taking it all for granted, as you and I take the blind beggar on the Boulevard. At last one day she is asked to join the firm, and she rebels.

"I have seen papa; he is a sarcastic little man with the eloquence of an acid. He took her clothes to pieces, and named the crimes that bought them—piece for piece; analysed the food in her stomach, the ring on her finger, the chair she sat on. Jeanne listened without the flicker of an eyelid till the catalogue was out, though she felt as if she were being choked with slime. Then she said, very quietly—

"‘You are my father, Pierre So-and-So, unless you stole me, or my mother deceived you; but you are a very dirty little pig.’

"Figure to yourself papa! And doubtless the remark was unfilial. He beat her black and blue. Brave girl! She took it like a shower bath.

"‘*Et après?*’ she asked, as he stood at last puffing.

"I ask you to admire that stroke. Oppression thinks itself so altogether omnipotent; but ‘*et après?*’ cries the martyr as the flames mount round him. The executioner has no answer to that. Nor had papa; he pulled his moustache, and swore.

"‘Goodbye, father,’ says Jeanne, composedly, ‘I go to earn an honest living.’

"This was papa’s opportunity, he sat down and rubbed his hands.

"‘You go to earn an honest living! Good! You don’t know shorthand, you cannot work a type-machine, you can’t sew, you can’t cook, and *enfin*, you are the daughter of a thief!’ He laughed. ‘There is but one way of living for the likes of you, and in that way no man would look twice at you, *ma petite*, except on a dark night, when Pétaud had put the lights out—I give you joy of its honesty.’

"As he doubled himself up with delight at his *esprit*

she spat in his face and rushed from the flat. She tumbled down the stairs blindly. The next moment, it seemed to her, she was running in the street. The next she was at Julian's."

Bertholet paused. The tall, white fountain splashed happily in the dusk of the courtyard. From the far-off Boulevard one heard a calling of "*Patrie ! la Patrie !*"

"It was," murmured Bertholet, half to himself, "a very wonderful escape for papa."

"And then ?" I urged.

"And then," he went on, "she arrived at Julian's."

"I was there when she opened the door—all the electricity gone out of her by now ; downcast, white-faced, panting. She stood with her hand on the door-knob, half in and half out of the studio, ready to fly away."

"I saw her at once. There was about her an air of spent passion—and something else latent—I don't know what. And she was dressed as models do not usually dress. *Enfin*, she captured me. . . . I went over and asked what she desired. To be a model, she said, in a hard, expressionless tone. I showed her the curtained corner where she could undress and wait for the hour. It wanted a quarter. It must have been a bad quarter of an hour for her."

"As she came out to get up on the stand she passed the model of the day hopping gingerly towards the curtain. She gave a quick glance at him and shuddered."

"She climbed up and stood limply, her eyes shut, her head down and her arms dangling—dead white all over, except for her bruises. They made me guess she had a lover."

"A moment's silence—you can guess how long it seemed to her, then Carpeau cried, 'Who wants this model ?' and every hand shot up, and there was a cry of '*Tout le monde.*'"

"Jeanne blushed as red as a peony, and then went white again. She says she saw through her closed eyelids that terrible rushing up of hands.

" 'Could she come on Monday morning?' asked Carpeau. 'Very well, then, at eight o'clock, sharp.' Jeanne, struggling with the back buttons of her blouse stuttered something. . . . 'Well, it was very unusual, but he would advance her ten francs on his own account.' Carpeau is not a bad sort of fellow for a damned fool. We all thought we knew the look she gave as she took the money. Posing is often the sequel to starvation, though starved-out models do not pose well. . . .

"On what," asked Bertholet with a smile, "do you think she broke her ten francs? But come inside! Here is Marie, she wants to take away the coffee things, and the night air is cold."

He led the way into the studio, turned on the light, and closed the doors behind us.

"Of course you will guess," he continued, as we settled ourselves in his padded armchairs. "She bought a flower for her hair."

"No, really," said I. "I was thinking of a telegram to papa."

"Not bad! That was the second purchase. It ran thus: 'I pose as an artist's model—Pétaud'; delicious signature, is it not? No name, and no address. As a matter of fact, until half-an-hour later she had no address. When at last she leaned out of her attic window and looked across the Gare Montparnasse over Paris, it was dusk, and the lights were springing up; she thought the town had never been so beautiful. Spring, too! and all the birds and the trees singing for her. . . . She walked the streets on air. She looked men in the eyes as she passed them. She wanted to catch hold of them and cry 'Idiots! do you not see how beautiful I am?' . . . I think I would give my eyes

and my Japanese prints for such an apotheosis. Yet all the while she stood poised for the leap to Monday morning. . . .

"She arrived at a quarter to eight—a deadly breach of the model's ethics, had she known. There was but one man in the studio."

"It was you."

"It was I. She seemed a trifle embarrassed. I told her there was no hurry; she could not take her pose till the *macier* arrived, and that would not be till half-past eight, if I knew Carpeau. However, I was wrong, he was there before the quarter, and by then the easel space was packed.

"She got up, her eyes glistening, her lips trembling, her heart pumping, to face this battery of young men's eyes; and Carpeau told her to take the pose she had had when she was chosen. This surprised her. She thought they would paint her as a god descending. So we started work. At the hour she did not want to stop posing.

"Resting behind her curtain she sang in the dark. Then she heard something that stopped her singing.

"Three words—'*What adorable ugliness!*'—just three little words, *mon ami*, and her blood froze.

"She peeped out between the curtains to make sure. Two men were standing before an easel, looking at the canvas on it. It was one of the two had spoken.

"She dressed like a sleep-walker.

"When she was ready she walked up to Carpeau and the rest of us sitting on the bench under the notice-board. Before he could say anything she told him she would pay back his ten francs in advance as soon as she had earned it; but she could not pose any more.

"Carpeau got up as red as a turkey-cock. Was she mad, or ill, or what was the misfortune?

"She repeated her words and made for the door.

Carpeau got in her way. *Sacré nom de pipe!* Did she think she could walk away like that with his ten francs in her pocket?

"I pulled Carpeau by the coat-tails, and told him to shut his silly jaw, said that I would pay him his ten francs. Jeanne thanked me grandly, and refused the loan. 'This gentleman had paid for the office.'

"'Office be damned,' said Carpeau, and would have said more, but I cut him short, for I saw thunder clouds.

"'Would mademoiselle give me a moment's talk alone with her?'

"She looked me up and down haughtily, said she would give me a moment, and walked away. I followed her.

"'Well?' she said, turning and standing against the barrier of the easel space with her hands on it. 'I wait, m'sieur.'

"'If mademoiselle would do me the honour of posing in my studio,' I suggested with my best bow.

"She took a step forward, the eyes gleaming; I thought she would strike me. But she let the head droop and shuddered.

"'No, monsieur,' she whispered, with tears in her voice, 'I am not a monster at a fair.'

"I assured her she deceived herself—she misunderstood me. She interested me greatly, I said. I respected and admired her character, and the stand she had made, and I did not want to lose sight of her. That was all. Whether she posed or not, let her come, as a friend, and bring a friend, a woman friend with her. I stopped short at that, and waited with some amount of trepidation for her reply.

"For quite a minute she stood silent, her eyes on the floor. Then she raised them and looked straight into mine. 'I will come, monsieur,' she said, coldly; 'but I will bring not a friend, but a knife.'

"It was impossible to smile at her heroics, she was so obviously sincere."

"You paid Carpeau his ten francs?"

"Shopkeeper," laughed Bertholet, clapping me on the shoulder, "do you think I got a discount?"

"But I bore you," he went on, getting up from his chair and fetching a decanter and two glasses from the sideboard. "Shall we finish the tale to-morrow?"

"No, no, my fine fellow," said I, "none of your *Arabian Night* tricks for me, thank you! A fight to a finish, if you please, I am tense with expectation."

"Poor little thing!" he jeered, "then let it have some red wine to help it stand the strain." And he poured me a glass-full.

"To your picture!" I cried, taking the glass, and holding it out to him.

"No," he said slowly, "I would rather you didn't. My god is a jealous god. Let us rather drink to Jeanne."

It was queer—he had gone white to the lips. . . . Yes, it was queer! I should certainly go to next year's Salon.

"The same afternoon," he went on, "she came here—strangely different from the Julian apparition; it was quite the ordinary society call. She wore gloves; she had bought and trimmed a hat.

"I gave her coffee, and showed her some of my prize bits—things the ordinary man would call ugly, and I told her that the true artist is not content with mere prettiness, that he seeks—but you know the *cliché*."

"Suddenly she got up and said, 'Where shall I undress?'"

"Without another word I went over to that alcove there and pulled the curtains back. She walked in and

shut me out with a rattle of curtain rings. I got my easel ready. In less than a minute she was out and on the stand.

"‘Now,’ she said, ‘tell me how I am beautiful.’

"I told her. How strong the lines were, how commanding, how from the eyes the soul looked out, how the whole body expressed an idea: the flaming prophetess. Oh, I tell you, I was eloquent. ‘Beautiful?’ I cried, ‘what do these silly students, with their classical copies and tame *Bougereaus* know of beauty? How should they gauge you and the splendour of your power? How should they see the flame of fierce life that beats about your limbs and plays in an aureole round your head. Beautiful! you are stupendous, heroic, divine!’ And I fell on my knees and kissed her feet.”

"Actor!"

"Idiot! I meant every word of it, she looked superb.

"The next moment she was down from the stand holding me tightly in her arms and kissing me fiercely—again and again. I felt horribly helpless. Then she got up on the stand again.”

"Immediately?"

"Immediately. I was very thankful; I was blushing like a boy—women will never understand artistic enthusiasm. I told her to keep just as she was, and plunged desperately into my work.

"After the first few strokes on the paper I found that black-and-white was inadequate. I threw aside the sketch, and rummaged for a canvas. When next I looked at the clock I found I had been working two hours.

"And there on the easel, it seemed absurd, was a masterpiece in embryo.

"Yes—a masterpiece! I had that queer feeling of helplessness again. What the devil had little Berthelot to do with masterpieces?"

"Which brought me to think at last of my model. What a brute I'd been! She must be abominably tired. Why had she not told me how the time went?"

"She said she had wanted to make sure of me. Now she was sure. That two hours' work was no empty compliment from so lazy a man."

"*Trouvé!* She had you there, dear friend. What an eye the girl has!"

"Don't be impudent, little man, or I will slap you. Have some more wine. Well, there is your story. And I am devilish hungry."

"And so am I! Story! Why, you've only given me the *hors d'œuvre*. What of your love passages? When did you make her your mistress?"

"Never! I had no say in the matter; she took me as her right. If I had refused I am sure she would have killed me, or kicked a hole in the picture, or done something equally tremendous and absurd. But no! I am a blackguard, I must not put it like that. It was inevitable. Besides, it was so novel an experience. After all, what had kept me from the women? Not my virtue, *nom de Dieu!* but my æsthetic sense. I have found female beauty so charming on the model-stand and so insipid off it, and I do hate fools. But Jeanne—she may horrify you, frighten you, she will never bore you."

"One of your writers, I think it was, said that the beauty of a beautiful mistress is the property of all the world; but the beauty one discovers in an ugly mistress, her momentary flush of harmony, is one's secret garden of delight. I have found that true. And then her voice is music and her eyes are fire."

"Why don't you marry her?"

"Englishman! What an immoral race you are! However, I have asked her to be my wife; half because I had to, half as an experiment. The experiment suc-

ceeded, she refused me. Most wives she felt rightly are ugly and unattractive, but a mistress is always adorable. And then, as a wife she would have had to see my masterpiece. It would have been a betrayal."

"Of Jeanne—or of the picture?"

"I am not sure."

"But Jeanne does not want to see it, you say?"

"She fears what would happen."

"As you do!"

Bertholet looked at me very gravely.

"I do not fear," he said, "I know."

"What, then, is this beast of a picture, and what horror have you made of her?" I asked, with a curious glance round the studio.

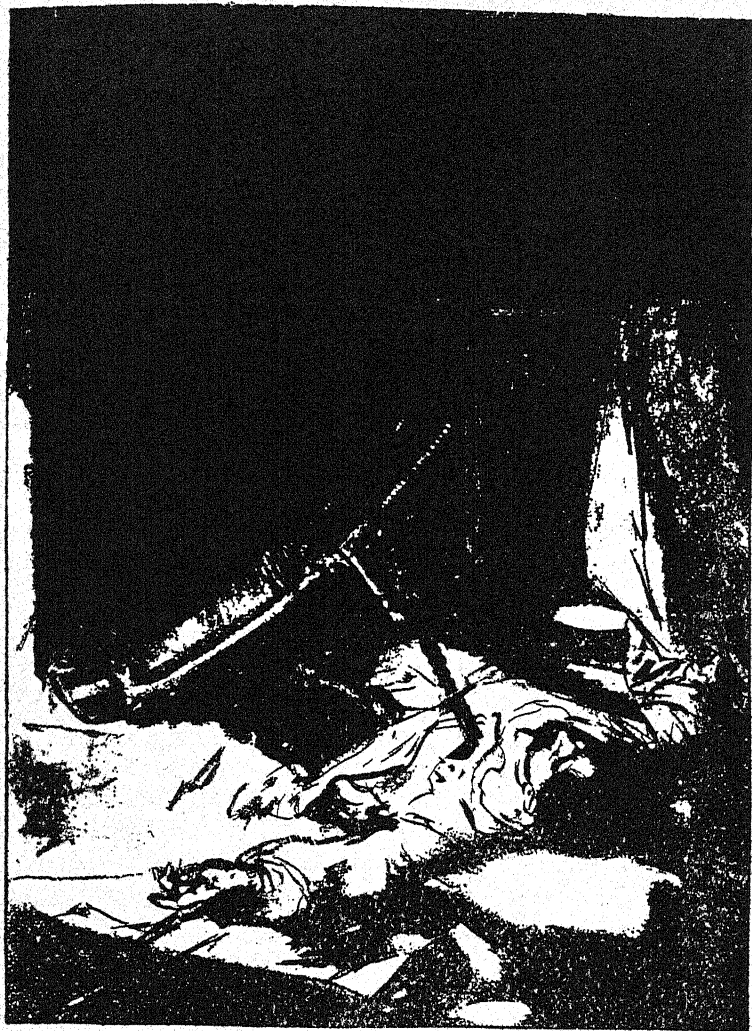
He ignored my questions.

"I hope I have not bored you with my love affairs," he went on, "happily they do not bore me—as yet; and her posing is magnificent. When the picture is finished we shall say 'Good-bye.'"

"You will throw her away?" I cried, indignantly.

"I did not think it of you!"

"Oh, you are obtuse, Mister Jones! She wishes it, and besides, what more will there be for us to do? I have arranged everything with papa. Of course she took me to see him—paraded me. You can imagine the scene—papa grinning ferociously, excessively polite, and evidently thinking me a damned fool. He is a handy little fellow, and very busy just now building iron skeletons for my sculptor friends. Strangely enough, since he has become a reformed character he has lost his nerve; he used to chuckle when he passed a policeman, now he trembles. Yet he finds life tedious, and chafes a little under Jeanne's iron rule. So when we have finished our picture, Jeanne will take him away to Senegambia, where I understand there is an opening for men of few scruples and large ideas. The blacks will make Jeanne



"M. BERTHOLET WAS DISCOVERED LYING UPON THE
FLOOR OF THE STUDIO WITH A LONG KNIFE DRIVEN
INTO HIS BREAST."

a goddess, and papa will be the high priest and work the junior idols with a string."

A few weeks later I read this paragraph in a copy of *The Matin* that fluttered down to Moret :

MYSTERIOUS CRIME IN THE RUE DE F.

"At 5.30 yesterday afternoon M. Bertholet, artist, residing at No. 36, Rue de F., was found dead in his studio. Coming to clear away the coffee things, which she had served as usual on a small table in the courtyard, just outside the studio door, his cook, Mme. Folet, found, to her surprise, the coffee untouched. She knocked, and got no reply. She tried the door, but it was fastened. Seriously alarmed, she called up the police, who were quickly on the spot. The door was burst open, and M. Bertholet was discovered lying upon the floor of the studio with a long knife driven into his breast. Fragments of broken wood and sticky canvas were found littered about the floor. Efforts have been made to fit the pieces together, at present without success. Robbery does not appear to have been the object of the crime. The weapon is an Eastern knife belonging to M. Bertholet, but the police are satisfied the wound could not have been self-inflicted. No other trace of the murderer was to be found."

And since they never did find any other trace of him, it is to be presumed they did not carry their researches as far as Senegambia.

CHAPTER XV.

I LEAVE PARIS.

Paris was beginning to bore me—or rather I was beginning to be bored with the life of a Paris model. The stale jests of the Academy students palled, their portentous efforts to be unconventional no longer amused me. Even the daily ritual of posing had lost its thrill of strangeness, and I had ceased to be enraptured by my magical power over the bolts and bars of private studios.

Nor did the common daily and nightly delights of Paris seem truly delightful. The life of the café and the Grandes Boulevards left me unmoved, the cabaret and the Bal Chic bored me to extinction.

My studio was unfriendly, unhomelike. I flitted from it to my work and my pleasure like a ghost; when I came home, and lit my lamp the bare boards and the bare walls woke to a noisy callous laughter.

As for my friends, even they seemed remote. They were all busy studying one thing or another, and, luckily for them, they were not studying Life—a shy Miss never

yet captured by the camera. Even Sami—well, perhaps not Sami, but that brave Rapin was just then in the thick of a love affair.

The truth was I was homesick and disappointed. I had exiled myself from all I belonged to for the sake of a life of adventure, and I found that adventure was no nearer to a model in the Latin Quarter than to a clerk in a London office. The main difference was that I got up earlier, that I walked to my work, and that my work was slightly less fatiguing and rather better paid.

And, yes! I longed to have somebody to talk to about the cricket scores. There was but one topic for my fellow models—the pose, its difficulty, its duration and its price. It is fair to say of my artist employers that they talked far more about Woman than about Art.

Even Paris as Paris disappointed me. She was a trivial toy compared with London. I longed for the vast perspectives of my city, her magical misty atmosphere, her pulsing lamps, her limitless close-packed, hurrying crowds. And I wanted to hear as I walked the streets the rumour of my native tongue—which is Cockney.

These symptoms are common enough, but the medicine I took for them was a queer one. I did not board the first boat-train (night service) for Dieppe, I shed my Latin Quarter life, and tramped farther away from London.

One thing I had gained which I did not mean to surrender: I had gained security, and, if not freedom, at least the twin brother of it. I had a good commodity to offer in the market of any great capital—for was I not the finest model in Paris? I could pose where, when and for whom I chose. Dismissal no longer meant death, but the summons to a new adventure. I had unhooked the sword of Damocles from over my head,

and I used it for a walking-stick. No master, or company of masters had the power to make me starve.

Even that sense of remoteness from men I determined to treasure, I wanted to clear myself from personal entanglements, to look at myself in the nude and in the round. I wanted to be quite alone in a large, empty space. I wanted to hear myself think.

These desires, though a trifle high-falutin', are not bad ones for a young man in his Wander-years. He may go mad; if he is very weak he may go silly; but more likely than not he will come out of the wilderness strong and well-braced, fit and hungry for work and friendship. My folly was to imagine that I should always stick in the wilderness. Already I had a beard!

My plan of campaign implied a vow of poverty. Yet I left Paris with a roll of banknotes in my pocket. In Paris it is almost impossible not to save.

Moreover, I intended to prosecute my search for the wilderness in the United States of America, and it needs money, or a knowledge of cattlemen's slang (which I had not), to get across the Atlantic. An American friend laughed at my plans; he assured me there were ring fences all round and up and down the States; but I never heeded him, I knew my Walt Whitman, my Bret Harte and my Deadwood Dick, and I was going to America.

I was going there in spite of the fact that I had lost my faith in America—though, like all sceptics, I clung desperately to the memory of it. Not the advice of my friend had worked this change, but a fragment of conversation caught a day or two after I had landed, in a *crémèrie* near the Boulevard de Montparnasse. The little Yankee lady's large, sharp voice possessed the room: "Sadi's a good girl," she was saying, "a dear, good

girl, but you can't go around with her—she isn't aristocratic." I compelled myself to believe that good Americans go to Paris only when they die. Yet I had to admit that there seemed to be an unconscionable number of bad Americans.

So I left Paris with my banknotes and my pack, *en route* for the States *via* the Forest of Fontainebleau. Bertholet had given me a letter of introduction to Barnard, the sculptor. He paid his models well, they said; and, besides, he might give me some useful hints on how to live the wild life in the magic world that lay the farther side of Fifth Avenue.

I said good-bye to all the fellows at Julian's, and Gabriel wept over me. I drank one last cup of coffee on the Boule Miche, circled once more round the band in the Luxembourg Gardens, had a beer-night with Sami, Randall and Allmann, and started out in the grey morning with the three of them on the road to Fontainebleau—or, rather, on the boat, for I found after all that I liked Paris too well to shed off her dingy suburbs rag by rag.

The Seine looked very pretty and sparkling in the early morning light. Paris had never been so delicate and young.

The fellows left me at the upstream terminus. I shouldered and strapped the fine, big white sack I had made, shook hands all round, said the appropriate things, and began my second attempt to escape from, civilisation.

I waved a farewell from the turn of the white-walled road, and three flapping handkerchiefs and a huge roar that was mainly Allmann's, replied.

A *gendarme*, posing under a white archway for a statue of General Boulanger, looked at me suspiciously. I beamed.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE THIEVES' KITCHEN OF MELUN.

It is a long walk from Paris to Melun, and I was weary of Grand National routes and monotonous rows of poplars, of strawberry fields and straggling vineyards, of stale-smelling wayside restaurants and shabby white-washed walls. And in the dusk, it seemed that all the shabbiness of old whitewash was concentrated in Melun. The houses had a grey, crumbled look, the very paving stones were tottery. Inhabitants were scarce to be seen, only here and there a white-capped housewife leaning out of window, and now and again a fierce-lipped *gendarme* strolling with a lazy clank. Yet light, and a sound of laughter came from the shuttered wine shops; plainly the shabby old shell of a town had a merry heart.

Which made me feel all the more tired and lonely, and the pilgrim's pack to press all the heavier upon my shoulders, and the chill night air to seem more deadly. I had meant to walk straight through Melun and sleep in Fontainebleau Forest. Now, without any conscious change in my intentions, I found myself asking a *gendarme* for an inn.

"What sort of inn?" he asked, mounting a frown of suspicion for my *ensemble*.

"The cheapest inn in Melun," I replied with a smile.

"The cheapest inn in Melun" he repeated, regarding me thoughtfully. "*Eh bien!* You must take the street to the left, and, after, the second street to the right.

There finds itself "The Black Pigeon"—it is down some steps. It is, *sans doute*, the cheapest inn in Melun."

And with that he turned on his heel, and clanked away. But when I paused at the corner and looked back, he was looking after me.

Whether "The Black Pigeon" was or was not the cheapest inn in Melun, it was certainly the shabbiest and ugliest. It seemed to have hardly any face at all. Crouched blindly at the foot of the stairs, it looked more like a cave in a hillside than a house. The shuttered windows were plastered over with dirt, and only a thin dim line of light revealed the presence of a doorway.

I tumbled down the broken steps, and pushed; and then beat with my fist on the bolted door.

There was a murmur of voices, followed by a shrill cry of—

"Who is it is there?"

"A traveller," I shouted back, "who wants a room for the night."

"There are no rooms," grumbled the voice; but the bolt was shot back, and a silhouette head peered out at me. My looks must have inspired confidence, for the door creaked open, and let loose an arsenal of smells, and a flickering glow of light.

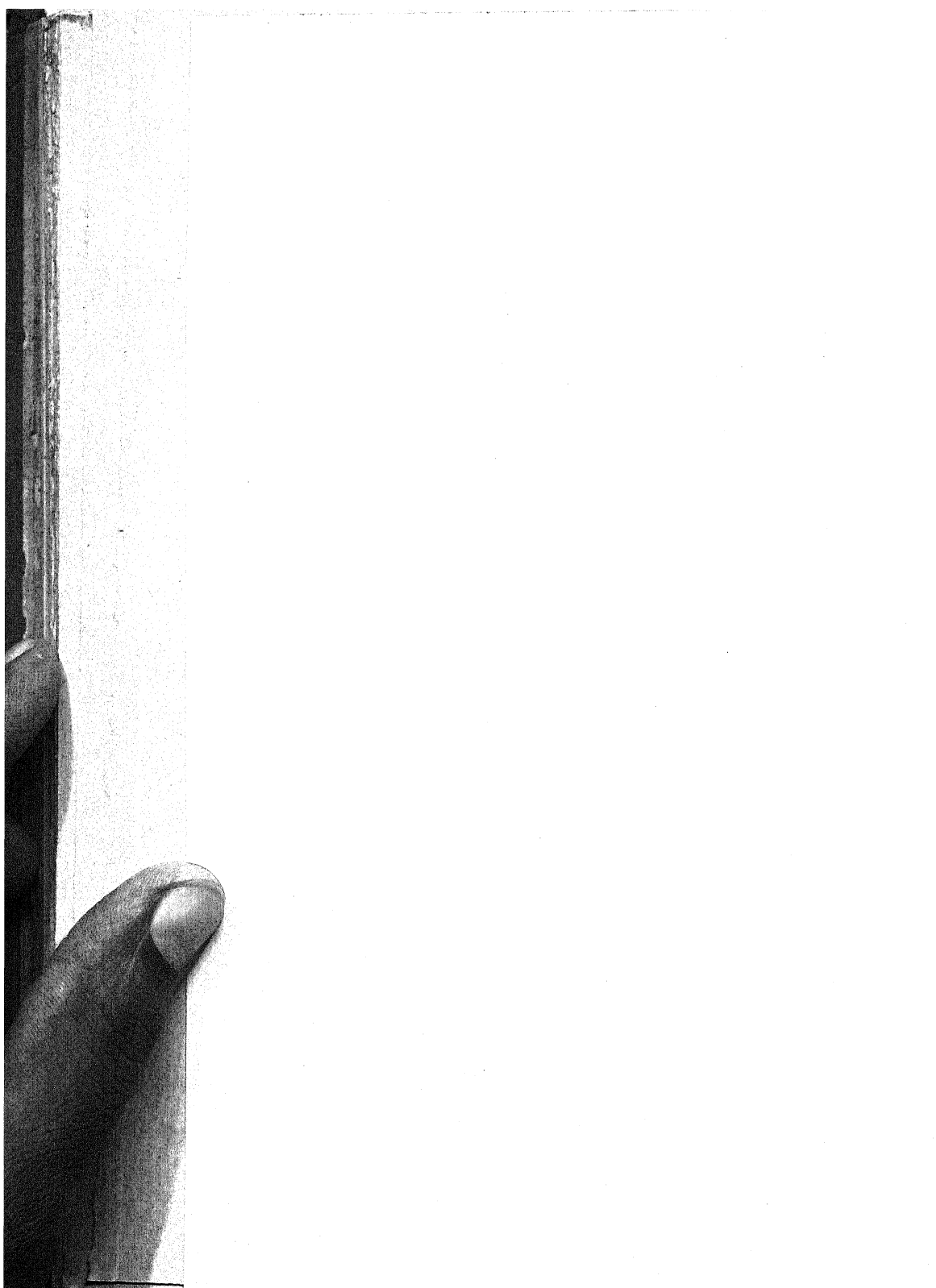
I was invited to enter, and stepped down into a very low-browed room lit by tallow candles, swinging in bottles from the grimy ceiling. The room was full of people, sprawling upon benches on either side of two long trestle tables, that ran the length of the bulging walls and left clear a narrow gangway in the centre. There was a dead silence. All the people were staring at me. The room was a-flicker with threatening eyes.

"*Enfin*, there are no rooms, but you can have a bed."

I turned to the speaker. She was a fat, swarthy woman, with an eagle's nose and untidy hair, and she was dressed casually in print blouse and petticoat, the



"I UNBUCKLED MY PACK AND THREW IT ON
THE BED." (Page 124.)



colour of dirt. Her hands were on her hips, her head was held sideways, her deep black eyes challenged me.

I said I would look at the bed, and she moved off with a "*Venez donc,*" opened a cupboard door and stepped inside. I followed her. As we climbed the bare, dark, twisting staircase, saluted by every noxious odour known to man, a dull murmur of voices came from the room below, and a laugh that was a growl.

The corridor of the second storey had a skylight, but no windows. Ineffectual lamps glimmered like glow-worms on the walls and in the rooms that opened right and left.

My hostess led me into a long, low room that held a dozen crumbling bedsteads laden with dingy bedclothes. I could sleep here, she said, looking round the room with an air of vicious contempt. It would be six sous for the night.

I was dismayed, though not at the price. The place was so dirty, so filthily dirty, The bare floor had tangles and clots of filth on it, the cracked plaster walls oozed dirt, the black ceiling bulged with it, and the room smelt, good God! of the stagnant breath of a hundred fœtid nights. There was a window—crusted over. Surely it had never been opened, nor the shutters beyond.

A broken corset hanging from a bed-post diverted my attention. Did women sleep here?"

"Naturally! Boys and girls together, but we charge you nothing extra for that,"—and she gave an evil grin.

"*Sapristi!* monsieur is not gallant, it seems," she said with a leer, as I turned to leave the room. "However, I have one room, a good room, though small," she added slowly; "it would cost you fifteen sous. You will see it? Good! *Allons!* it is on the floor above."

The room was small, and it was windowless. The lamp was a feeble nightlight, swimming in oil. The bed

was a bed of the sort you would expect to find in a bad inn—dingy, but sound in wind and limb, sheets with traces of fleas, but otherwise moderately clean, a huge puff of red-covered feather mattresses and quilts in sepulchral scaffolding. The subsidiary furniture was a *table-de-nuit*, with a washbowl on it, by the side of the bed, and a mirror and three hooks on the one vertical wall.

Seventy-five centimes! For a franc you can get a bed anywhere; but it was late, and I was tired. I took the room.

"*Eh bien!* pay, if you please," and she held her hand out.

"*Merc'!*" she snapped, as she absorbed the money. The next moment I was alone.

I unbuckled my pack, threw it on the bed, and sat myself beside it. Here was a pretty adventure! Though I had caught but a passing glimpse of my fellow-lodgers I was prepared to take an oath to their villainy. And how much better was my hostess? . . . Here was a nameless stranger with a fat pack, and probably some money. . . . I walked to the door—thank goodness there was a key in the lock. I shut the door, turned the key, and had a happy jump at the heart, gave the door a pull, and *voila!* it opened like magic. Decidedly I was in for an adventure.

At the same time I was hungry, and I had no food in my pack. I determined to look my troubles in the face, to find out what sort of people they were who were going to murder me. I slung my pack on one arm, and stumbled blindly down the stairs.

My appearance was greeted with a cheer. A dirty old fellow, all wrinkles and eyebrows, made room for me. I thanked him, and stowed my pack under the bench.

Madame was seated by herself near the door, with her elbows on a little table, smoking a cigarette, and

drinking red wine and water. I went over to her, and asked if I could eat.

"*Mais non!*" she said, "what think you—at this time of night? The soup is all eaten. Bread one can have, and wine, *c'est tout*."

And she puffed fiercely at me, and dived her nose again into the wine.

The old vagabond who had made place for me was patently either a philanthropist or my destined executioner. For as I stood there with hungry chops, about to accept this sacramental fare, he hollo'ed out "*Allons enfants de la patrie!* there is some soup here in the bucket," and held out his bowl.

The soup was lukewarm water with a memory of meat, and yet it was delicious. The old boy grinned at me amiably as I wolfed it down.

The rest of the room was surveying me with equal interest. A lantern-jawed fellow with a thin, menacing nose and a fierce black moustache, who sat opposite me at the table, puffed rank tobacco in my face, and asked if I was a curate. I stifled a desire to baptise him with my soup, and answered that I was not, but supposed him to be a bishop.

It was an innocent little joke, yet the company roared, and my benefactor clapped me on the back, vowing that I was a brave fellow. A chubby-faced little woman, with jet bead eyes, who sat on the other side of me pitched and tossed with joy.

"A bishop—him! *Sacré nom*, he has smelt incense but once, and that was when he robbed the Church of the Holy Gridiron."

Before she had finished the sentence my antagonist was half across the table with a knife in his hand.

"Lie down, you fool"—it was Madame who spoke—and in a voice that bit. "Put down my cutlery and squat, or out you go on to the *trottoir*."

The brave fellow meekly did as he was told. A murmur of applause went round the room. Madame puffed her cigarette contemptuously. Her inn was evidently the best as well as the worst in Melun.

And now I was a personage, a comrade. The atmosphere of the place had changed. Still to-day in France a robber will give you back your jewels if you treat him to an epigram.

The visible sign of my promotion was that the company left me alone to eat my soup and to gossip with my two neighbours. He was a pedlar, it seemed, his name was Blackhead. She was The Swallow, his *belle amie*. They took me for a colleague—with my huge pack. No! I told them, I was a travelling poet—Smith by name. They accepted the information with every token of respect.

“Yes, they had guessed I was English.”

We drank wine together, talking gaily of the hardships of the road and the horrors of rheumatics. But cowardice forbad me to tell them truthfully my intentions for the morrow.

One by one, with a shrug and a yawn and an argot curse, the guests slouched off to bed. Soon I followed their example, shaking Blackhead and the Swallow heartily by the hand, and getting a sharp “M’sieur!” for my good-night to Madame. I stumbled and bumped into my room, closed the door, pulled and pushed the bedstead endwise against it, fell heavily on the feathers and slept, booted and spurred, with my pack for a pillow.

* * * *

In the night I woke to a pressure on the door.

Once and again!

Then softly the handle was released, and the sound of padded footsteps lessened and was gone.

I chuckled to myself. Was it the Bishop, or



"MY ANTAGONIST WAS HALF ACROSS THE TABLE
WITH A KNIFE IN HIS HAND." (Page 125.)

Blackhead? Probably the Bishop, Blackhead was a gentleman, and would not murder a pal.

In spite of my chuckle, it was some time before I stopped listening, and the glow of the nightlight broadened to a blaze . . . and faded . . . and was the morning shining faintly through the cob-webbed window above me.

When I got down, all the world had skiddaddled, except two brisk young fellows, in peaked caps and quite presentable blue linen jackets, who were arranging their stock of ballads on the floor.

I bought *La Marseillaise* and *La Belle Amour* for a sou apiece, and hummed them over as I soaked my bread in my bowl of milk and coffee, which Madame handed to me from the kitchen with an amiable *Bon jour*. Seen by the light of day, she was quite a normal French hostess—energetic, polite and vinegary.

I took the road to the forest singing lustily the war song of the Revolution.

“*Allons enfants de la patrie !*

Le jour de la gloire est arrivé.”

The *gendarmes* that I passed *en route* seemed to approve of my patriotic sentiments.

CHAPTER XVII.

GEORGE GRAY BARNARD.

A man humped like a camel, or a pedlar, a man in a piratical felt hat, in hair down to his shoulders, and clothes of sundry countries and periods, does not look like The Englishman *en tour*, even if he does not look like anything else; and only the Englishman *en tour* would understand English in Moret. So, with utmost composure, the bright-eyed, eager, bullet-headed little man in shirt-sleeves and blue boiler-trousers, went on speaking American to the tall, pale lady in lace dress and large straw sun-bonnet, of the things they were to have for dinner.

I let them go on; I was curious to know the diet of a famous American sculptor lost in the provinces of France—though I shall not tell you what I learned. But, when more delicate matters were on the point of utterance, I stepped forward, doffed my hat, made my best bow, and said:

“Mr. Barnard, I believe!”

He turned and stared at me.

You can imagine his feelings! Suppose a typical Italian organ-grinder—earrings, long black hair, and monkey, all complete—were suddenly to address the passer-by with the remark “How do, Johnson? Didn’t I see you down at Ascot? Or suppose yourself Balaam when the ass spake, or the Cabinet when Major Archer Shee refused to be comforted, and you will get an idea of

the staggering effect my words must have had, issuing from my shaggy envelope.

And I was almost as greatly astonished. For—"he stared at me," I say; but he stared with only one of his eyes, the other had a queer air of looking in upon itself reflectively. You could not call it a squint, it was much more mysterious than that; it was very disconcerting. The eye that regarded me was cold and calculating, the other eye was soft and luminous. I have never seen in another man the artist and the man of business so strangely combined, and so sharply differentiated.

Yes, he admitted, his name was Barnard; what could he do for me? My name was Smith, I told him, and I had a letter of introduction from M. Bertholet. He took the note from my hand, and turned to the lady.

"Well, goodbye, dear!—see you at dinner."

The lady smiled, and sailed off alongside the white convent-wall.

Barnard read the note, and looked at me, more puzzled than ever. I was a model? he asked, his American accent aggressively obvious. I assented.

"Well, it's too late to see you to-night. You can come along to-morrow morning, eight—prompt, mind! I'm off to Paris by the nine train. Ring that bell!"—he pointed towards a sunken door in the wall—"ask for Monsieur Buard; he'll tell you where to wait. Now you'd better get some food and a lodging. Madam Boulogne at the wine-shop just inside the gate will feed you, and the Maison du Bain down by the river is cheap and clean. To-morrow, eight, prompt." With a word and a flick of the hand he was gone through the iron door.

I made my way back along lanes of whiteness to where Moret's peak-capped gate-towers stand sentinel over their inviolate town.

I liked Moret. I like all towns that know where they begin, that tell you as you thread their gateways "Without is barbarous country, within is a cosy civilisation of cobbled streets and comfortable shops and friendly inns." You should be able to enter a town as you enter a house, and shut the door on the vulgar stare of the universe.

I walked into the Town, and found myself in a street of gay, white peace and flitting gaudy colours. A scrubbed and polished street; and yet with a certain ruggedness, a certain hint of ancientry, and with a shoot of cathedral buttress over the roofline that kept its dignity secure!

The Maison du Bain was a tall, white house with yellow *jalousies* that looked out upon the river on one side, upon cobbles and white-walled blossoming gardens on the other. I found Madame the *locataire* a cheery peasant woman with quick ways and carved pointed features—features that were as a rule all eager for business, but were capable of a most entrancing smile. She took me up a corkscrew, clattering, wooden staircase to my room under the roof: a river-room with a window-seat, and one of those terrible feather beds wherein the continental buries himself each night in the hope of a joyful resurrection.

A franc a day, she said, eyeing the snowy linen and scrubbed boards contentedly, and if Monsieur would stop a month that would be for twenty. I took the leasehold for the night, bowed her out, unpacked, changed, and stumbled down the stair.

Passing the open door of the kitchen, I was aware of a great blaze of copper and the homely voice of Monsieur crying a welcome. Madame was at the door, street-gazing. She gave me a motherly smile, and handed me a key. . . .

Madame Boulogne was rosier and rounder than the Lady of the Bath. She did not love travel, and one

found her sitting in state, now in her bar parlour, and now in her dining-room. When I first met her, she was at dinner, presiding over a tableful of men. The bright-eyed, black-haired girl, who showed me in, placed a chair for me, and sat down beside me, while Madame



screamed to the kitchen for plate and cutlery. The company bowed and smiled, and went on eating and talking and drinking red wine. So that I was able to satisfy a lusty appetite and observe the room and its occupants undisturbed.

Of the room I can remember nothing now but its

wall-decorations. Opposite me was a large crucifix, crudely carved, black with age, and flanked on the one side by a cheap coloured print of a military procession and on the other side by a highly impressionist portrait of Madame. On the wall to my left, beside the window, was a great green and purple landscape; over the door to the right hung a plaster portrait in high relief—also of Madame. With a wisdom prejudiced by an extensive Latin-Quarter experience, I determined that the Fine Art was payment in kind from impecunious *pensionnaires*. And I wondered if the merry, blonde man, in light blue clothes, with broad stony placid face and dominant nose, were the sculptor of the High Relief; and if the quick, finicking, urbane young fellow with the eloquent fingers and the long silky moustache, were the painter of the green-and-purple landscape and the mauve Madame.

The little, reticent, sharp-featured man in official black, who burrowed into his plate on my left I put down as an aboriginal and no artist. The round-faced, long-haired boy who rollicked and flirted to the right of Madame was evidently a favourite at court, a lazy artist, and a prompt payer. Madame and the girl talked mostly with him and the aboriginal, which last punctuated the laughter and the rattle with solemn, snipped monosyllables between a bite and a bite.

The silky painter leant over the table and discussed art eagerly with the blonde sculptor and two heavy fellows who were peasants from their looks and artists from their speech. Again and again I caught the name of Barnard. Evidently Barnard was a grand seigneur in Moret.

Madame made delicious soups, and cooked her vegetables to perfection. This the painter found occasion to observe as Madame rose with the girl, smiled a jest at us, and left us to our wine. I noted that, while the

rest of the company drank vin ordinaire, the blond sculptor had a label on his bottle.

The boy-artist, robbed of his women, plunged into discussion with the painter, overthrew all his arguments in a flood of argot, burst into song, slapped the sculptor on the back, jeered at the aboriginal for his glumness, and then turned to me and asked very merrily but very politely if I wasn't English, and did I like Moret. The next moment we were comparing notes on the Latin Quarter, and discovering mutual acquaintances.

Moret was a condemned hole of a place, he declared, only fit to sleep and make money in. But yes! *la galette!* what would you?—it was necessary! He would sweat another month or two modelling mud for American pigs, and then he would off to Paris, for the balls and the boulevards and the fêtes.

The blond sculptor smiled benevolently all over his flushed face, and lifted up a full glass to the light. . . .

* * * *

When I knocked at the iron gate the next day, it was opened by a queer little man in a flat peaked cap and clay-stained overall. His face hid itself behind huge fierce moustaches—two little twinkles of eyes peeping out between them and the cap. He looked like a soldier, as any Frenchman will look if you stick a peaked cap on his head.

I asked for M. Buard. The little man grinned and bowed. But—an appointment with M. Barnar'?—oh, impossible—absolutely impossible! he said. M. Barnar' was on the point of departure for Paris.

Nevertheless I insisted.

He raised his hands in despair, grumbled to himself, turned, and trotted away down the steep stone steps which joined the street to the garden. A sunken garden of lawn and mediæval statuary, bounded by calm, white

walls! The little man trotted through it and disappeared into a severe convent-like house of dazzling whiteness.

The next minute he was back again, bursting with apologies.

He led me down the steps, and up some more into a vast room that looked like the temple of an idolatrous cult. Here and there, on rough wheelable stands, were huge figures wrapped in yellow cloths, and beside every giant idol was a smaller one in plaster—this figure bent, as in the act of embracing an invisible shape; that one kneeling; that one carrying on bent back an invisible burden. On the stands were scattered implements which might have been sacrificial, but were actually sculptors' tools. A strong smell of wet clay filled the air.

He led me on into another room, draped all in black—the ceiling draped, the walls and the windows draped, so that only a still, soft twilight flooded the room. Doubtless this was the inmost shrine of the sanctuary; for, solitary in the centre of it, looking very terrible in the gloom, writhed a greyish figure, bent backward in agony.

M. Buard did not seem to feel the solemnity of the place. He indicated a chair, asked would I undress, said that M. Barnar' would be there on the instant, grinned, and vanished. I was alone with the god; and, although I was used to sculptor's studios, there was something in that calm, dim room, with its single anguished idol which affected me strangely.

I stripped off my things, and with that I lost my fears. I too, was a god; and, when I took the pose of the other, and looked at him and myself in a high, oblong mirror propped against a black-draped wall, I did not know which was the more splendid and terrible.

An exclamation startled me. I turned.

"No! stay just so!" cried Barnard, framed in the

doorway. And then, in a lower tone—"M. Buard, *venez ici!*"

The little man came trotting.

"*Regardez!*"

"*Epatant!*"

"*Magnifique!*"

"*Superbe!*"

It was a duet of admiration in crescendo. Rather embarrassing to me, who saw the reflex of their astonished faces in the mirror: the American squinting abominably, the Frenchman with his bristle all on end.

"Well," said Barnard, "there's only one thing I've got to say to you. What do you mean by only dropping down here to-day? I've been dreaming about you for two years! And here have I been wasting myself all the time on flabby Italians. It's real mean of you. I can't give you anything to do for the next few weeks; there's this fellow here to finish off. But I'm not letting you go, now I've got hold of you."

He pursed his baby lips, and looked at the floor.

"Can you stoke?" he said suddenly, letting me have the full battery of his eyes.

With assurance born of complete ignorance, I said that I could.

"Well, I need a stoker bad. My stoker's turned queer, and I must have my studios warm. If you think you're level with it, I guess you'd better start in right away. M. Buard here will tell you how. Seven francs fifty per day, and from four-thirty in the morning till six at night. Good-bye!"

And the extraordinary fellow was gone before I had a chance of expressing approval of his wages and horror at his hours.

CHAPTER XVIII.

STOKING.

My window looked out on a street of cobbles and white-washed houses, with one great break of low-walled garden in the houseline—of garden all greenery, blossom, and sunshine in the summer, but now a haunt of sorrowful spectres that creaked and sighed and peeped disconsolately over the whitewashed wall.

Through the staircase window you looked on the river, swift and turbulent, and the snug, tethered laundry-boat gay with the white flags of a blameless life, and the long black line of tall, elegant poplars on the farther bank, and away to the right the obstinate strong grey of the ancient bridge planted knee-deep in the foam.

The house was built in the breach of the town wall—grew out of it, whitewash from grey stone, without discordancy. In a turretted chamber along the street lowed a cow over her young. The sentry gate-tower that chopped short the High Street was an inn, and announced in black-letter text that here one got wine, white and red, at forty centimes a litre.

When I stretched my neck a little out of the window I could see a grey spire shooting up over the house-tops into the clouds—the spire of the old cathedral church that looked like a great rock made musical.

* * *

This was my Sunday world—for every other day of the week it was a dream well-nigh unbelievable. Then

I left the house in the dark, and came back to it in the shadow. Then the grey spire was an unseen presence that thundered in the night and banged me from my pillow.

I fumbled for a match and a candle, and dressed drunkenly with the eyes sealed and the teeth chattering. The clatter of my feet on the corkscrew wooden stairs hardly wakened me; but the sharp edge of the outside air shore away my sleep like a cut veil. So cold was it I seemed to be walking in a void.

The lamps were out, the night was black; in the narrow side-streets the sky was a high roof of black violet; the walls of the houses were shifting masses of semi-transparent silk; the invisible cobble-stones bumped and surged under my frozen feet. It was too cold to think. Only it seemed obvious that the world was dead, and I only of all men left alive in it.

I broke into a shambling run, feeling in my pocket for the key.

The door showed black in the misty wall. I felt along it with numb finger-tips for the keyhole, fitted the key jerkily, and turned it with a rasp. The door hinged inwards, and disappeared into a patch of night sky, veined across with tossing bare branches.

Down steep, stone steps on the faith of memory. Half turn to the right—six paces! Through an unlocked glazed door. Matches from pocket! Flash! (My eyes blinked in the warm sudden flame). Stoop to the right! Pick up oil lantern! Open! Turn up wick! Light it! Close the glass! Now I could see things dimly. I stepped on with lifted hands reaching up and forward. Click! It was day.

I was in a cellar, with a flat, smoky roof, smoky brick pillars supporting it. Just in front of me, down one deep step, was a huge boiler. Away back to the left was a mountain of coal. A serpent, covered with black stuff

scales, crawled out of the boiler and round the top of the wall, slightly hissing. Just to my left were heaped-up cinders. Behind pillars to the right the floor went up into a plateau littered with iron stands, wire, pieces of clay figures, screws, bolts, nuts.

From one of the pillars I took down and put on a



grimy leather apron that almost covered me from neck to foot. Then I opened the furnace doors, and peered in. The fire was a low, dull glow that breathed a fine warm welcome to me. My hands began to tingle and my face to glow. I closed the top door, and turned a handle at the side of the boiler. A little crowd of sparks fell through the under-grating of the furnace into

the ashes. I took up a long iron with a claw at the end of it, and raked out the wedged cinders from between the bars. Then I shovelled out the ashes. Then I smashed huge chunks of coal into nubbly bits to tempt the appetite of the fire, put them in,

shovelful after shovelful, with a wait between each two feeds. I looked at the indicator—five degrees and mounting fast. Enough water in the boiler? No. I turned another handle, heard a sudden cool rush, and saw the indicator needle jump back to zero. I worked the draught crank vigorously, and a great red glow deepened on the floor of the ashpit. With painful slowness the needle began to mount.

Out into the black-nipped garden with my lantern and the ashes! I shook the ashes through a sieve. Fine dust rose in a choking, blinding cloud. My eyes, ears, nose and mouth were full of it.

When I had cleared my eyes it seemed that my lantern had dwindled to a pinpoint, and the world had suddenly gone grey. A dark grey sky, a dark grey earth, with a rush of vertical pallor round the garden, and a livid stone saint in trailing draperies poised before me in mid-air. A morning wind stirred all the massed purple branches into sight and motion.

A distant chanticleer (or was it a steam whistle?) began to sing.

* * * *

Freedom!

To-morrow, if I willed, I could say good-bye to all this—pack my sack and begone. If I willed, I could stop here a day, a month, a year, a life-time. The ache of the limbs and the smart of the eyes, the bullyings, condescensions you took for the fun of the thing—just to taste. Then you put down the glass. Anyhow, here was something you had known.

To be free—free to do, to say, to be exactly what you liked, to fly as the birds flew with only the elements to control me.

To have stripped off all superiorities, all reputation, to be able to do anything without disgracing myself. To be the lowest. To let all the world step over me. To

be an outcast, an outlaw, to be free ! To take up this little town like a bauble, to play with it, to put it away. To take up this earth like a ball, to play with it, to put it away. To praise the beauty of all this, of earth and sky and sea and my own body and the bodies of my fellows ; and to let all pass. To possess nothing. Not to desire to possess. To be king ! To be servant ! To be free !

Once I had had a house and friends, and I had felt myself shrinking to the size of that house and those friends. Now I felt the universe was just large enough for me. I remembered a fiddle-backed chair. It was a long time before I could free my soul from the taint of that fiddle-backed chair.

Now my home took its true place. It was a warm circle of glowing faces in the dark to which at any moment I could return.

But if I had no home ? I shut my eyes and fancied how it would be ; and shuddered with the intolerable cold ; and stretched out my arms. To every bird of the air its nest. And yet !

It was a very comfortable and a very beautiful fiddle-backed chair.

CHAPTER XIX.

A CHRISTMAS CAMP.

There are only two decent, respectable heights for a Christmas tree—sixty feet, and one foot. It should be either a natural object, or a symbol. These ten-foot drawing-room monsters are mere excuses for the display of provisions and gew-gaws. A children's tree is very good fun for everybody but the poor tree. Under its load of baubles, sugar-stuffs, fruits, and coloured lights it droops, and blushes, and sighs for its lost dignity. "Oh," it sadly creaks, "I was born to be something better than a dumb waiter. When they dug me up, and carted me away from my brothers, they promised to make me a symbol." "You shall mean wonderful things," they said. "Wise men shall come to look at you and talk of misty beliefs from the beginnings of man. You shall be a sign and a promise of the eternal fruitfulness of the earth." And now behold me and my shame!

Our Berlin landlady was wiser. Her tree was exactly twelve inches long. It was priced (she proudly told us) at fifty pfennig—say sixpence—and she got it (pat her back) for fourpence-halfpenny.

We placed our symbol on a little table, and put lighted candles on its finger-tips, and simple fruits of the earth—apples, oranges, and spice-cakes—round its head and under its armpits.

Then we sat round it and sang carols—SHE and I

and the servant girl and the landlady. The girl comes from Pomerania, where they still love God.

* * * *

It was a good symbol, and preached bravely. But I longed for my great sixty-footers. And a Fontainebleau hut above all drawing-rooms.

My sixty-footers of twelve months ago, when I lived in the log hut the wood-choppers left me.

Seen from the path twenty yards away (a dry earth path you padded over noiselessly) it was a grass hillock. Its human face it only showed to the Christmas trees. They clustered in front and on either side—very proud, very straight, and very stiff—silent and self-contained. No lolling sentimental curves about them! Up they shot and out they pushed—firm and bristling. You wouldn't have thought of loading them with sugar soldiers and petticoats. If you had thought it, they would just have looked at you, and you would have grovelled. I couldn't even fit my symbolism on them. I tried, and they burst all the seams.

But we held a great Christmas feast together. Over a wood fire in my hut I cooked tea and eggs, and roasted pears and chestnuts, and when the night came down, and the hut was a black cavern splashed with red, I sat in the doorway munching and looking out at my trees, and for want of candles the moon and the stars stuck themselves in the branches. Now and again came the far-off voice of a dog or a motor-car! Nothing else except the night crack and rustle! These were all my carols. One doesn't sing carols in a pine wood—without one is a bird, or a wind, or an inanimate object.

Fontainebleau and a log hut for a Christmas above all drawing-rooms!

I woke in the morning, swam up through the straw, jumped off my bedstead (horizontal logs from wall to wall under pine boards), lit a candle, shook myself, took

off a suit or two—mere night crusts—and then trotted away to the village of Bois-le-roi, with a sack flapping at my back, and water and milk bottles in my several hands.

The start was in the half light—pale and shivery. The grass crunched with the white frost. The wood-pile by the path was snowy. There was enough rime to wash the hands and face in.

My eyes blinked. The first few steps tottered on the verge of sleep-walking.

Here came cross-roads and signboards. Villainous signboards! Horribly explicit! Even you, dear town-bred reader, could not have failed your way. And I was at home, and scorned all finger-posts. I turned to the left by instinct, and staggered down a long slope. Now to the right again, and onwards to the road!

Hoot! Rush!—a clattering motor puffed by, headlong—leaving an unwholesome taint in the clean air. I saw it pass (and scatter) a family of tramps plodding towards me under burdens. Then it dashed off into the sun, just rimmed above the roadway. I left the tramps walking in fire, and swung into the forest again.

When I got to the village it was broad day. Men wrapped up to the eyes in long capes, and women in voluminous shawls dragged their wooden shoes down the slippery street.

It was pleasant to come down to men. If my French had been presentable, I should have gathered them in the public place, and uttered prophecies.

First to my spicery. A dignified old woman in carved oak served me with eggs, chocolate, butter, sugar, chestnuts, and pears. The pears necessitated ascension to a granary. A stupendous storehouse! She dosed me with fifteen pieces a day for six weeks, and still there were more.

"*Voilà, monsieur!*" Have I not frozen in the night? No? It is wonderful! Never one sleeps in the forest

at Christmas. "You are strong, monsieur," says the demure mouth. "Those mad English!" say the malicious eyes.

But no, she has no apples.

Thence to the milkery. A litre, hot and bubbling. "Bfff! You have right, monsieur, it is cold."

The bakery. A walking-stick of bread. "But yes, monsieur, it is cold!"

The village pump. A sparkling bottleful. "But yes——" The rest was inarticulate sobbing.



Home under the sun! A long, solitary, crisp, white, glittering footpath, till I struck the Way of the Long Valleys, mounted the rise, and found my great pines looking down at me.

A fire to be made! This is the centre and meaning of all camp-life.

I had been prudent, and stored wood, logs, and twigs. Now I built a beautiful little pyramid with a stuffing of paper. But the wood was still damp. It flustered,

swore, smoked, and went out. The face got black, and the temper short; the eyes and the breath got smoky. I uttered fierce blasphemies against camp fires, and sighed for patent fuel and a forced draught. O fool! Harken!

Crackle! crackle!

Go it, little buster! Heaven smile on you for a brave twig. Show these sloppy fellows how to burn.

Crackle! crackle!! spit!!! hiss! crackle! Ah!

(Mr. Printer, oblige me with a line of exclamation points.)

! ! ! ! ! ! !
! ! ! ! ! ! !
! ! ! ! ! ! !

(Thank you!)

This magnificent display of printing resources but dimly expresses what were my emotions as from twig to twig leapt the live flame I had made with my hands, and my choked breath, and these cursed French sulphur matches.

Do you know the French sulphur match? You strike it on a box, and if you are lucky, and the box is new, the match turns blue at the tip.

And stinks!

After ten minutes the flame comes.

But what does it matter? There is no hurry in my hut.

I put milk in a can hanging over the fire by a string from the roof. I toast pears, I butter breads, squatting baking before the blaze. When the pears hotten they send forth a most delicious steam. I butter the bread rhythmically, without haste (what do you mean, sir, by "o'clock"?) and set it in the heat to frizzle. Now I must crush chocolate. Here comes the milk wrathfully up to the top of the can.

Such feasts!



"IN THE AFTERNOON I HAD A VISITOR—A HUGE
FIERCE MOUSTACHED MILITARY PERSON."

I believe you don't know what bread and butter taste like.

When I had stocked to the brim, and lain on my back and considered things, and tried to write—only the Christmas trees laughed at me—and gathered timber and fir cones, it was time to prepare dinner.

In the afternoon I had a visitor. A guard of the forest. A huge, fierce, moustached, military person. He dawned upon my consciousness by blocking up the light of the doorway. I looked up from my scribbling.

“Good-day, sir!”

“Salute, sir!” What was I doing?

I was making the writings!

Where was I sleeping?

Here.

“It is forbidden,” said the guard, wagging his head judiciously, and frowning at my fire.

“But, sir, I am English. And I have no gun. I lay no snares. The deer, the rabbits and the weasels are free of me. Simply I sit at my fire and make the writings.”

“It is forbidden to sleep in the forest,” he repeated, a little doubtfully—then, very stern:

“Your papers!”

I handed him my University matriculation certificate. This seemed satisfactory. A fat name in the middle, and an illegible signature at the tail.

“Good.” He returned the “papers.” “But— it is forbidden.”

“Have mercy, sir,” I pleaded, “if you drag me from this place you will shatter a sonnet-sequence.”

That wouldn't stir an Epping keeper a hair's-breadth. He would have at me for my permit, and be done with it. But my Frenchman was touched. He knitted his brows and tugged at his moustaches.

"Sir," I pleaded, "you may rest in peace. I will kill no creature. Wind fallings shall be my only fuel, and there shall not be a forest conflagration."

"It is forbidden," he murmured to himself, and turned and stopped, and shook his head, and murmured . . . and walked out of the picture.

I was four more weeks in the hut, and I never saw him again.

But it was an awful lie about that sonnet-sequence. I never made a sonnet in my life. Please the papers, I never shall.

After supper I went to see the Table of the Grand Master—a raised stone slab, with a suite of stools round him. He stands at the top of a hill that a roadway climbs, and as I went up the road in the night I saw him high above me, bathed in the moonlight, green and terrible.

In honour of the feast I sat and stood upon each and every stool, and danced solemnly upon the table top. It must have been a weird sight to the wild boar I heard afterwards ramping in the undergrowth.

On my way back I tried a short cut across country, and the moon being hid, I lost my hut for an hour, and then fell over it. (No, that was New Year's Eve—but no matter, it pads out the chapter.)

At home I didn't light a candle. Just put on my extra night clothes—three suits and an overcoat—crawled under the straw, and slept.

I disremember entirely when it was the black-bearded Fabian came from England, and made me keep a fire going all night to warm his feet—and started lecturing on Hygiene as soon as his soles got hot. The black-guard!

* * * *

In June I went back to shake hands with things and collect some laundry.

Hallo! What was wrong? There were the trees. There was the path. . . . And nothing between! Had a tornado struck my house, or an earthquake engulfed it? No, I thought I could guess.

After much pondering and perturbation of spirit, my guard of the forest had decided that I ought not to sleep there.

And this was his theatrical way of saying so.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DONKEY WITH THE SPLENDID EYE.

FONTAINEBLEAU FOREST,
RONTE DES GROS BOIS.

So my little girl wants me to write for her the story of the donkey with the splendid eye—the story that bubbled out between kisses in those rose-coloured days when Moret and Eden had one gate, or at least Moret had two gates, but they both led to Eden.

Alas the while! So great a theme! and tools so poor! To wit:

- (1) Malignant ink clinging thinly to the bottom of its pot.
- (2) A pen bent nearly double in the carrying—the nibs at petulant cross purposes and rageously spluttering!

Besides, a boot does not make a good writing desk.

"A boot ! quotha ! Into what strange contortions is he twisted that he writes on his shoe-leather ? !

Nay, good soul, be not disquieted. Here is no serpent body. The boot holds not to its parent limb, but lies detached, pressed into more spiritual service, with its customary inhabitant nestling nakedly among brown leaves and green grasses, to the astonishment, let us suppose, of certain insect adventurers who wriggle over it ticklesomely. The little beasts tickle all over me ; I am at these presents a Wood God undraped, free to the world's kisses.

For instance, a wanton wind is buzzing me at will, chilling the backbone a little, but proving very comforting to the sense of smell, which borrows thence forgetfulness of its proximity to an ancient grey shirt, clamorous for the embraces of the washerwoman.

Hughfff ! Master Wind becomes obtrusive. Ye backbone conquers ye nose. I will veil myself in my grey garment of mustiness.

To tramps and other leisurely persons unfinancial the grey shirt may be much commended. You may keep him from his tub for a circled year without a change in his complexion, and none but dogs and hunters shall be aware of his abstinence from liquor. These should be avoided after the tenth month. . . .

I have an effectual hiding-place from the rude stare of clothen things. A grove of young trees, thickly planted ; I don't know how they call themselves.

There is war in the upper branches, and I am spattered with corpses.

People occasionally crash their way through the undergrowth, but turn into falling twigs when I face them. A squirrel interviewed me from a height before I put my shirt on, vanishing tumultuously at the stirring of my left eyelid. . . .

Gosh! I am hungry. I will tell you the rest of the story of the donkey with the magnificent eye after lunch.

— M E N U —

Cheese
Bread
Chocolate
Figs

A thousand and one DEVILS! I have lost my knife. Miserable man that I am! Civilisation glides from me on the edge of my lost incisor. As to the hunter his gun, so is his knife to the vagabond. With it he can carve his way through events and victuals, nonchalant and aplomb. The forest is his woodpile, the garden is his green grocery, the henroost is his butcher's shop. Is he literary? His name and sentiments shall spring to vision upon tree trunk and casual stone. Is he timorous? He shall view the midnight traveller of the lowering brow unmoved, the venomous housedog shall bay to him no fear. Imperially at high noon he spreads himself in some sunny spot of the hills, after the meal magnificent, delicately carven, picking his teeth at need.

View him now fangless!—O woeful spectacle! He shrinks to shadow before the most lamblike nightwalker. His nether limbs contract apprehensively at the voice of the puppy dog. He grubs for carrots and other succulencies with uncut claws. I refuse to describe how he makes away with his poultry; a complex business, and provocative of vegetarianism—which, indeed, ensues; he grows ox-like, a grass eater. Gradually he loses his upright carriage. Eventually you find him in some mountain recess, grovelling upon all fours and very hairy.

“But why couldn't he buy another knife? A good one doesn't cost more than a franc.”

THE DONKEY WITH THE SPLENDID EYE. 153

Madam, a man with a franc in his pocket is not a tramp—he is a tourist.

* * * *

Gosh! I am hungry. I must to mine house. I will tell you the rest of the story of the donkey with the splendid eye after dinner.



CHAPTER XXI.

AN EXCURSION.

Of a Sabbath, when the good Parisian is flush of money, and tired of business, and it is summer, and the theatres are all closed and the night halls are not, and the boulevards rock with fervent heat, then gathers he what family he may happen to possess under his wing, hies him to the Gare de Lyon, and demands with hauteur, for he is a *bourgeois*, sundry excursion tickets to the Forest of Fontainebleau.

It is a matter of centimes and sentiment at which station of three he will alight—Bois-le-roi (Kingswood), Fontainebleau Town, or Moret. (There is another place called Thomery, where the trains never stop. They issue tickets to it, and charge you the difference when you get out at the next station).

If he goes to Fontainebleau Town he will not see the forest. When he arrives it will be noon, and he will make the great *déjeuner*. Thereafter a functionary in a beautiful cocked hat and etceteras will drag him and his through the rooms of the Palace with everlasting chatter about its long since worm-eaten owners, the chairs they squatted in, the tables they ate from, the tapestries that hung around them.

He and his are staunch Republicans, and they love to pierce the privacy of kings, and to cringe to its magnificence.

Dazzled, open-mouthed, and content, they suck in in the tinsel

grandeur. How much it must have cost! Monsieur the father, who is a furniture dealer in the Boulevard Sebastopol, tries to figure it out, but gets fogged in the shillings and gives it up.

Madame the mother falls flat on her face, and rubs her nose in the carpets.

Mademoiselle Jeanne and Monsieur Jacques are vision-

ary, and stalk through the white salon, the blue salon, the tapestried salons, the bedrooms,

the hall for the taking off of boots, the room for the falling under the table, the chambers of Francois, of Louis, of Napoleon, in absolute possession and lightning metempsychosis. Till the Functionary turns them out.



Shall they go see the forest? There is hardly time, and it is probably nasty and damp, says Madame—though the children are doubtful. Better have a coffee, spent as they are with much splendour. Then the train comes, catches, and hurls them away.

One points out the trees through the windows.

For the foolish few who really want to see the forest, Bois-le-roi is the ticket. Nothing but trees is to be seen there, except a cluster of cottages half a mile from the station.

If they book to Thomery and break loose at Moret they will probably reach their forest. For, after all, what is there to see in Moret? Something for the artist. Nothing for the tripper. Only to those that live with her and love her, does Moret reveal herself.

Moret is not in Fontainebleau. It hangs to its skirts by threads of white houses springing from its walls. One thread joins the town with the station. It is a principle in the district to build the stations half-a-mile from the houses—for the sake of the walk, or the quiet, perhaps.

Follow a main thread home, and you will come to a prim, stone, red-capped tower, arched over two gateways. The windows of the tower are oblong slits, from which you fancy an archer will presently poke out a crossbow and a question. But he doesn't, and no portcullis thunders down. That is all the difference. Otherwise Moret is very much as Moret must have been when Francis the First was king—whenever that was.

Its ways are clean cobble, and its houses white. Go there in the summer, and green shoots at you from all its crannies, the forest pushes its green outposts almost down to the walls, the gardens are massed verdure, and

the streets are a rattle of wooden shoes, and a glitter of white caps and blue aprons and blouses, spotless as—no, there is nothing so white nor so blue.

Go there in the winter, and Moret stands very cold and stern in its bared fields. The summer caps and blouses are all put away, and man huddles up under mountainous clothing. He does not often come into the light then, but burrows beneath his roof when the day's work is done, to wake to a morning of fresh labour. A grey life, one would think, but he has the philosophy of vegetation.

He shows his love for the summer as the flowers do —by blossoming, and knows as much as they about the beautiful.

You rarely find him in the forest. His summer Sunday walk is up a hillside road bordered with market gardens that let the wind blow across them. When he turns back he will see Moret lying below him, white with her grey spire, and beyond, the Loing with its canal, and again beyond, a sweep of hills, and a great white railway bridge leaping across the valley.

His summer evening seat is the pavement before his door, with his family, or in one of the toy cafés of the High Street, where he blossoms to the clink of glass and the soft patter of card playing. If he is very old, he may sit on a wooden bench on the grass square that fronts the upper gate. If he is young he may lean, he and another, on the low coping of the rugged stone bridge, hedged with the whirr of millgear and strong eddy; watching the current, or the green banks, or the grey church, and the grey, grim keep inside the circling wall—the wall with its gaping gate-tower that frames the cobbled street and dabs of sprawling dark and fragments of shadowed houses on either side.

This is his finest resting place.

Just on twilight, when the day turns back and pauses

smiling ; when the women who washed clothes by the river side have put their white-covered baskets on their heads, and are climbing the steep stone steps that lead through the wall into the town ; when the inner street shows like a grey dream-picture through the yellowing walls ; when the groups on the bridge get flat and darken ; when the bridge roadway is purple, and the up-river water and the sky are one flame !

Darker ! Darker ! Figures clod together into black masses, grow shapeless, unhuman. Darker ! darker ! Till the solitary words and broken laughter borne on the dull rush and whirr of the stream are insoluble mysteries from another world.

Here comes the night wind chilly. The bridge empties ; up street is a manifold clatter of wooden shoes. Fainter and fainter. Infrequent. Ceasing. The noise of the water grows loud and menacing. Far off among the branches the wind whispers and weeps.

* * * *

Moret of the sunlight !

The sun loves her, and paints the fluid stones of her streets and the floating walls of her houses in delicate, light, swimming colours, in flute notes mounting up by semitones to the limit of vision. There is no more form. Houses merge into streets, streets flow up into houses. Houses and streets joyfully vibrate in the sun. This is no gross, palpable matter, this shimmering city of cloud. It is made of the stuff of the dawn and the sunset. If I stretch out my hand to a touch, will it not surely melt under my fingers ? melt and form again phantasmically ? Will it not soon float up from the dull earth—up, up, up . . . to the piping of thin notes—thin, thin, thin notes, higher, higher, higher ; till it fades away, softly, delicately fades away into its mother, the sky ?

All but the old walls and the towers, the grey, grim keep and the strong, simple, beautiful, huge-buttressed church !

And the Moret people ? . . . Yes, the Moret people will remain. They try their best. They wear white caps and blue blouses ; but they have no wings. And I think those wooden shoes must be very heavy.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE QUATZARTS BALL.

I wanted to write something about the Quatzarts Ball, but at the present moment the Quatzarts Ball doesn't interest me in the least. What do I care for the convolutions of students in their night gear and women models without their night gear to the tune of Champagne and "La vraie Parisienne?" These things be vanities, foster children of Folly, begotten of Youth in the hot womb of Desire; a fico for them!

Besides, I never really went to the Ball—couldn't get a costume for love, and hadn't the money. (I had "blued" all my bank-notes in a trip to England with Randall and Sami.)

They are exiguous at the Quatzarts. You may come in as scanty a garment as you will—something that smacks of the freedom of the bath-room—but it must be of the period. If the Committee has decided to flatter the Roman Decadence, as they did on this occasion, your toga and your tunic must appear to have sprung from the hands of Rome's most fashionable tailor. (You will remember the sad case of poor Sami!) For the gold fillet and bracelet—the least that your lady may wear to be safe from rejection—you, her artist friend, will hunt through twenty volumes at St. Genviève, and study a hundred statues.

To be safe from rejection ? Yes, for be it known unto all cavillers, sticklers and straight-laced persons whatsoever that the Committee has decreed :—

Le Nu, comme toujours, est absolument

INTERDIT !

A naive confession ! I have much joy of this absolute interdict.

Only men students and women models can get tickets for the Quatzarts Ball. And I was only a man model. Nevertheless I got a ticket—on the eve of the great, the eventful day. Then I petitioned each, all and every one of my artist friends for togas, tunics, sandals—anything that would pass muster as Roman at the jealous portal to the temple of delights. But they all with one accord were a-going to the ball.

Now a ticket to the Quatzarts Ball in the hands of a man who has eyes and does not intend to get drunk on beer or beauty is a pearl of great price. And to shy at the entrance for want of a measley gown ! It was stupendously idiotic.

I determined to see Fink.

Fink is a personage. He draws, but not too well. Paints indifferently. Is a competent nobody at most games. Makes poetry with pretty skill. Is a chemist, a scientist, a metaphysician—all of the outer courts. Is an instrument that can play what tune you will with placid mediocrity. But he has one stupendous excellence. He has *taste*. He will criticise you a picture, a poem, a carpet, a steam-engine, or an economic theory with any man in Europe. But painting, drawing and sculpture are his chief gods. His collection of Japanese prints is known. Over a drawing of Rubens or of Michael Angelo I have seen him chuckle like a sweet-chawing schoolboy. This, I think, is enough to crown and to stamp the man. . . . Fink would be able to advise me.

Fink lived (and lives still, when he is not lounging round Italy) in a street of calm white spotless houses, wooden-latticed, near the Jardin de Luxembourg. He has a furnished *atelier*, facing a courtyard, and part of a garden house. It is the *atelier* of an amateur—gorgeously carpetted and bedecked. Here is an old statue, there a famous picture which he has discovered. Every available flat space is loaded with volumes of re-productions and with exotic garments! I think he could clothe the whole of Tokio. Fink was evidently my man.

But, unfortunately, Fink was away at Chaville for the week-end, and of Fink's sister I am afraid—she is so learned and so large. Fink smiles—Fink's sister beams—Fink criticises—Fink's sister lays down the law—and then—the Quatzarts Ball? It seemed difficult. . . .

So we talked about Barnard, America's greatest sculptor.

The Finks had met him the day before at a sale of mediaeval statuary.

Oh! I forgot; I must tell you here that when, not long before, I had posed for Barnard he had boasted of his discernment, and shown me his collection.

I told Fink's sister this. She laughed.

"He will know something by now," she said. "John (Fink, that is) gave him a succinct and comprehensive account of how to know an 'early French' when you see it. Barnard was greatly impressed. He is very willing to learn."

This—of America's greatest sculptor—made me gasp.

"He models well," I suggested, feebly.

"Yes, he's a fine sculptor. And it's curious how little sculptors do know about art—except the English ones."

"And they know nothing about sculpture, I suppose?"

Fink's sister acquiesced with a large, placid nod.

Only after I had drunken two cups of tea and eaten several slices of bread and butter and apple jelly (excellent apple jelly, by the way, only I ate too much of it, out of sheer nervousness) did I dare to broach the business of the toga.

I really half hoped she would blush—it would have taken something off her largeness—I half feared she might strike me. She only puckered her brows.

"No! We haven't anything."

"All the shops are closed," I murmured, "and I must have the thing to-morrow (and it was I that blushed).

"If only it had been Japanese! But Roman Decadence! The only Roman relic we possess is an Eagle standard—or part of one. Could you——" and then she paused for me to help her across the hiatus.

"Well," she went on, pensively, "it's a great pity! Try in the shops to-morrow. They'll hurry up and make a bed-gown for you if you tell them why you want it."

I blushed again, and said I would try.

Fink's sister asked me what I thought of their latest thing in Japanese prints.

* * * *

And so I did not go to the Quatzarts Ball.

But I saw tributaries flowing to it down the Rue de Rennes and the Boulevard St. Germain, figures darkly veiled in long mantles with white linen projecting from the ends; and I saw sections of it rolling home the next morning, crowned with vine leaves, rosy and drunken, flaunting their once white linen, tumbled and wine-stained, in the eye of the curious day.

From the cafés which bordered my route to the Beaux Arts arose great uproar, and I beheld, at little round tables—waited on by wooden-faced, swallow-tailed *garçons*—centurion, emperor, consul, lictor, slave and



“FROM THE CAFÉS WHICH BORDERED MY ROUTE TO THE BEAUX ARTS AROSE
GREAT UPROAR.”

wrapped-up screaming bundles of sodden, wild-haired beauty (or thereabouts) saluting their haggard selves and universal space in tremulous glasses.

I was posing in Ingalbert's studio, but I found my stand already occupied. A splendid Roman, gold at front and waist, stood on it, quivering, aspen-like (as a matter of fact it was the apple jelly I thought of) with lifted cup. The other arm encircled a flaccid goddess, who had diddled the prohibition on the strength of her ear-rings. Round them on the floor of the studio was a heap of linen and flesh—more or less conscious. As I came in, the mighty, tottering Roman pressed flaccid Venus to his breast, and the centre of gravity went wrong.

Down came my five heroes splashing and shrieking. It was an awful job to get them right-end-up again.

The flaccid Venus wanted to kiss me. As far as I can remember I didn't let her.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HANS BIEBERMEYER.

He lived in the Rotunda : a nest of artists' studios, whose name describes its shape, built upon a hill—you must have seen it !—at the very brim of the Great Boulevard that swings round the battlements. Rents are low out there, and the air is good—especially low and especially good on the high top-storey of the Rotunda, whence is caught a glimpse of the casual wooden tents of Malakoff, and, beyond them, of calm white wall, low-clustered vineyard, and eager ants of horse-trams crawling along brown-pencilled ways. From the townward windows you have a far perspective of shabby, straggled streets falling steeply into a mass of white houses, grey houses, thin spire, tall cupola and golden flying angel, veined with lines of green, and lit up with stray snatches of bridged and glittering river ; and then of a tremendous cluster of houses and spires that climb to the summit of Montmartre.

From Hans Biebermeyer's room you got a squint at both these pictures, and each of them seemed terribly alien and remote. He felt doubly an exile in a hostile land. His Kommersbuch of German student songs was his only consolation—or had he another ?

The Rotunda was tenanted by all sorts and conditions of foreigners, a good few of them women. There were Germans, Poles, Czechs, Russians, Austrians, Italians, two Danes, and a Swede. The most of them were learned, and all of them were poor.

They were much too poor to feed well, and too poor as a general rule to have models of their own, though four or five of them kept mistresses. And so for two hours a day they shared a model in a sort of outhouse with wide cracks in the wooden walls and an ineffectual coke stove. An hour's posing in that Cavern of the Four Winds was worth a day of Julian's, and they paid a little less than Trade Union rates. But they gave long rests, and the company was the best in Paris.

So that, after the day when a wild-bearded emissary found me working in the Rue du Dragon and lured me up the hill, I came often, and posed my best—which is saying something! Never had a model given them such live, intricate poses, or kept his pose so faithfully. I soon made friends.

They worked like galley-slaves, slashing the paper with flying charcoal, savagely conscious of the centimes that slipped away with the ticking of the Rotunda clock.

And nobody worked harder than Hans. God knows why he had turned painter, and on what he fed the feverish enthusiasm for his art; for he had not the shadow of a talent. To see him, day after day, burning his soul into the paper, and creating nothing but a gallery of anatomic studies all out of drawing, was horrible. The boy had brains: he would have made an excellent Professor of Philosophy, and here he was wasting himself and the white-hot ardour of his youth on work the silliest (or the wisest) Beaux Arts student would have giggled over.

The Rotunda did not giggle over it. It giggled

over nothing except the absurdities of Constitutional Authority and of the Catholic Church.

Hans was a pale, handsome fellow with black tumbled hair, thin eager features—one cheek scored with a duelling Schmiss—a mobile mouth, and blazing black eyes. I took him for a Latin, but he came from the German Rhine.



I noticed him almost at once on the occasion of my first visit. He had the air of a man running a long-distance race, and losing his wind. He did not join the group that clustered round me in the Pause, clamorous for political argument, but laboured away at his drawing with charcoal and bread-crumbs until I climbed again

upon the stand. And, when the second and final hour was up, I was dressed and had straightened my hair, and got my hat on and my mantle over my arm before he unpinned his drawing, rolled it up and sighed.

I was surprised when he walked up to me, introduced himself with a bow, and asked if I would play a game of chess over a cup of tea. As it happened, I had pledged myself already to a brisk, neat, blue-eyed Swede called—I have forgotten his name; so, instead, Hans came with us.

The Swede was an aristocrat of the Rotunda; he made designs for all the second-best jewellers, and lived on the first floor in a suite of three rooms. His sitting-room was furnished sumptuously with a broad *chaise-longue* and ever so many basket-work easy-chairs. The floor was carpeted, and the walls were lined with books.

We climbed the spiral staircase, that was the marrow of the Rotunda, in a flood of argument (there were seven or eight of us); and tea and chess did not stem the course of it, though the chess was played with fierce intensity.

They were frightfully eager, these young men; they seemed possessed of a devil of nervous excitement. The worst of the lot was a little Russian, all claws and spectacles, who riddled my political—and broke up my pawn—position with a few spasmodic stabbing gestures. Hans sat at my side saying hardly anything, but he drank in the excitement like wine.

The next night I was to take tea with him, though not in his own room. He led me up to the third floor, and knocked at a door placarded in huge, decorative script with the name —“Blanco.” A pretty little French girl opened, and smiled us in.

“Blanco; where is he?” asked Hans, chucking her under the chin.

"He will be back on the moment, M. Hans," she answered. "He has gone to the baker's for some bread."

Hans murmured in my ear that his own place was in disorder; and we sat down on the sofa-bed, while the girl dipped the kettle into a pailful of water, and put it on a spirit-stove to boil.

I had not seen Blanco; he came rarely to the out-house, Hans told me; but he was a fine painter—this with a false composure, as he took down the chessmen



and the board from a meagrely-filled bookshelf, and jerked his head at the canvasses and drawings on the wall.

They were horrible things mostly, though undeniably clever. There were nude women in ugly postures, nude men and women in the act of love, and other pieces more coarsely obscene. It was obvious that the little tea-maker had been a constant model. And I was not disappointed, when at last Blanco entered, singing, with a long walking-stick of bread under his arm,

to find that he had thick, sensual lips and an evil squint in his large luminous eyes, and that he had posed for his own pictures.

He welcomed me with charming politeness.

When Annette had served the tea for us, she went off to the far end of the room, where she sat on a cushion in the corner, playing with her plait, and singing softly to herself. Blanco had no interest for our game; he sat back in his chair, rolling and smoking cigarettes, and rallying Hans on his latest drawings. There was a touch of insolence in his fun. I saw Hans wince at it. By-and-by we started talking philosophy, and Blanco yawned. He beckoned to Annette; she came obediently, and sat on his knee. He kissed and squeezed her for a while, fondling her almost to extremes of lovemaking, and then suddenly spat in her face with a laugh, and pushed her from him.

"*Cochon!*" she said in an indifferent tone, wiping her face on her sleeve, and moving off to her corner. Hans played on as if the incident were not extraordinary.

* * * *

He walked with me down the hill. The night was black, and the lamps were few. Now and then a blurred shape hurried past us. Here and there on the threshold of a low-built house clustered a group of black shadows. From the wine-shops came a burst of laughter and song. There was a slight smell of staleness in the air.

We walked along for some minutes without speaking. He broke the silence with the irrelevant remark—

"In Heidelberg on such a night as this we should have put all the lamps out."

And then he went on to tell me how the students pestered the poor citizens, who lived on the reputation the University gave to the town. He told me tales of

the duels he had fought ; he talked of Bierkneipen and flirtation ; he sang snatches of student-song.

It seemed he had studied law, until he realised what he was preparing to be, and that he was too virile for the life of an official, too honest for a lawyer of the Courts. So he turned to philosophy, and liked it. And philosophy led him to the study of æsthetics ; and then he resolved to quit the University.

"Mr. Smith," he cried, gripping my arm tight, "I discovered that I was an artist. I may be a very bad artist—Blanco says I am, and my pictures do not sell—but I am an artist, or I am nothing. And there is nothing else, nothing in the whole world, nothing but the making of beautiful things. Law, philosophy, medicine—what are they worth ? Well, I suppose they are sometimes useful to the artist. But to create !—to turn a blank canvas from Bonnet's into a glorious living work of art ! Oh, that is worth living for !

"Look down at all those twinkling lights of Paris ! Why do they thrill you ? Why does Paris mean more to you than any other city in the world ? Because Paris is an artist ; because, while other cities seek riches, power, comfort, luxury, ease, Paris seeks beauty—whether on canvas, in clay, or in the frivolous laughter and whirling skirts of a *demi-mondaine*."

"Paris is great," I said, "not because she worships beauty, but because she worships ideas."

"Rubbish !" he cried. "All cities, all men, worship ideas. Is not wealth, is not power, is not luxury an idea ? No, my good friend ! Paris is great because it will not bow down to the baser gods, but only to that great secret goddess in whom we live and move and have our being."

If Blanco's studio were a sample shrine, I thought, the worship of the secret goddess was not quite cleanly.

"And so," he said, pausing where the street dips down and hides itself in squalor, "I took lessons in the

evening after my lectures ; and then I came to Paris. I had read of her, dreamt of her ; at last I saw her—saw her great grave galleries and her laughing Boulevards. It meant starvation, for my parents were rightly angry—(I had knocked the bottom out of things for them) ; but it meant life. This was the suicide that Schopenhauer wrote about. My single ticket to the Gare de l'Ouest was a declaration of the will to live."

He put his hands on my two shoulders. His face looked tense and tragic in the fitful lampshine.

"Did I not will strongly enough ?" he asked, half sobbing. "I am not dead yet, and Paris will not have me ; my pictures do not sell."

There was silence after that. What could I say ? I had seen his work : what consolation could I offer ?

"You are wondering," he went on, "how it is that I am not dead yet ; how I pay my rent ; how I get my food, my paper, and my charcoal. My friend, I am a beggar ! I do not pay my rent. I eat with Blanco and the others ; I borrow from them my paper and my charcoal. The patron does not want my room just now. It is the worst in the Rotunda—very high up, very small, and very draughty. It does not let easily. If the patron lets it"—he shrugged his shoulders—"perhaps Blanco will let me sleep on the floor of his studio—perhaps he will not. I sometimes pose for him.

"You will wonder, too, that I do not pose more—you, who pose so splendidly. I am not strong enough. I posed once for the class, and I fainted—the first day of my week. And moreover, I must work ; the days are precious. A day lost, and my hand is out of gear. Blanco may work or not as he chooses—he paints as easily as he speaks—but I must take the citadel of beauty by assault ; I must batter my way into the Holy of Holies ; I dare not rest from the attack."

The clocks were striking one. We had been talking for an hour. I fear I began to fidget. I was tired and sleepy, and bed seemed the only desirable thing in the world.

"I don't know why I've told you all this," he said with a smile, "I have known you a couple of days. And these others I have known for months (nearly a year, good God!) and to them I am only a foolish German who cannot draw!"

He put both hands on my shoulders and shook me.

"Mr. Smith!" he whispered hoarsely, "I bare my heart to you. I love Beauty—the beauty of colour and line—as a man loves the beauty of his mistress. I desire beauty, I lust for it. And all around me I see her giving herself to men who do not love her; but not to me, not to me! *Ach, Du lieber Gott!*" he cried, sobbing, and hiding his face in his hands, "why can I not make beautiful things?"

"But you will go on trying!" I said, very lamely, I fear, for I was repelled by the theatrical manner and the stupid obstinacy of the man.

He showed a white, stern face to me.

"Of course! What else? I find no savour in any other way of life . . ."

"You do not understand the kind of man I am," he went on after a pause. "To you all life is an adventure; you tramp, you write poems, you pose, you make love, you edit a paper; your heart is in everything, and in nothing; you play your part, and march on. But to me the world is a horror, circumstance hurts me at every turn. I do not even love my fellows; they wound me too much. Solely I love Beauty and the radiance of her robes brushing the ugly earth. And to catch a glimpse of that radiance and to give a hint of it upon canvas or paper I would give my mortal life and my immortal soul."

He turned abruptly, without farewells, and went up the hill in long strides, a black shadow in the night. I lit a cigarette, and stared after him, frowning.

I could not quite make up my mind. I liked the flavour of the man, he seemed genuine. And yet—his tragic dilemma was so self-imposed, so avoidable. Either the man was an actor after all, or he was mad. With which superficial judgment on all enthusiasts, I shrugged my shoulders and walked home.

But his words troubled me, they sounded like a reproach. Here was I, attaining a number of things easily, and striving for nothing I did not easily attain; and here was this man, who could have done many things easily and tolerably well, devoting his life to just one craft for which he had no skill; giving himself up mercilessly for the sake of a mocking dream; striving day by day, month after month, with clumsy insurgent fingers, to paint the fashion of his dream; enduring hunger, cold, and insult, with no prospect of wealth, fame, or accomplishment, and with no thought of surrender! My blood thrilled, and my cheek blushed at the summons of that hopeless fight.

"Hopeless!" I said angrily to my trouserless reflection in the mirror of my studio. "What rot you hedonists talk! From such great fighting something fine is bound to come. A fine picture, or a fine man."

And then I yawned and stretched, made a face at myself for company's sake, slipped into bed with a book—the lamp on a box beside me—settled myself to read, and fell asleep instantaneously. . . .

Hans had come to visit me. I was not certain I had done right, but I had got a big spread for the occasion. Randall and Sami and Allmann were coming in later for some beer. Hans ate ravenously, but absent-mindedly; all the while he was brooding—on I don't know what.

"Why don't you fall in love, or play football, or keep up your fencing?" I asked him.

He only heard me after a moment or so; then he woke up and smiled.

"It all costs money and time, and I have none to spare of either."

"But you feed on yourself," I urged. "You want an outlet. And think how many artists have drawn inspiration from their love-affairs!"

He shook his head impatiently.

"That is an old fairy-tale, invented to apologise for the weakness of great men, and glorify the vices of little ones. Besides, it is not inspiration I want, my dear friend; I am chockfull of it—I want fingers—fingers!"

He raised his cramped hands and looked at them with a sort of contemptuous curiosity. "Shall I not curse my mother's womb," he said soberly, "that gave me the soul of an artist and the fingers of a typing clerk?"

A knock came at the door. I got up and opened it, and Allmann lumbered in, bulging with smiles and beer-bottles. Roaring at the perennial joke, he drew out the bottles from his trousers, and stood them in a goodly row along the wall. Then I introduced him to Hans.

Allmann grinned, and looked stupid; Hans bowed stiffly, and said he had the honour. Then I cleared the table, and we sat down at it with some beer. The two Germans, stuck stiffly at opposite sides of the table, looked in their jam-pots, at the ceiling, at the floor, and at me—never at each other, and broke silence only with a Yes or a No in counter to my desperate leads.

I did not know what to make of them. Was it because one came from the Rhine and the other from Berlin? Or was it a feeling of caste? Was my starving enthusiast an aristocratic prig? Or was Hans haughty

because ideas had made him so thin, and trade had made Allmann so fat? Allmann was as bad; he was as glum and bashful as a schoolboy in the presence of his master. I was much relieved when Sami and Randall dropped in.

Sami recognised Hans at once as a man and a brother; Randall was more reticent. But Schubert was common ground, and we were soon on a flood-tide of song with Hans at the piano.

We had a roaring evening. Hans was great at student songs. He enrolled us as members of a student corps. He seemed to have forgotten all about Paris and art and ideals. He initiated us into all sorts of queer observances; we drank salamanders, we swore eternal brotherhood. The last thing I remember before I fell asleep is the picture of Hans and Allmann with one foot apiece on the table, fists joined and glasses raised, shouting aloud the chorus of "Deutschland Uber Alles." When I opened my eyes in the morning, Hans was gone.

Allmann went too, as soon as he had drunk his coffee. And then I told the others about Hans. Sami was thrilled, but Randall sneered and growled. He hated these cheap martyrdoms. If the man couldn't paint, why didn't he express his love for beauty in good brick-laying, or good law-making? They were sentimentalists both, I told them—Sami enjoyed the taste of the artist's life, Randall enjoyed the taste of the life of the Paris workman; but here was an idealist. . . .

"Oh, damn all idealists!" said Randall. "They paint all the bad pictures and spoil all the good ones with their praises."

"What Biebermeyer wants," said Sami sagely, "is *une petite femme*."

I was surprised to find Randall agree. . . .

That afternoon, at the Rotunda, Hans was grumpy and unapproachable. He seemed ashamed of his de-

bauch, and angry with me for having led him into it. He looked washed out.

But the next day he was nicer than ever, and had me up to his own little room. It was a bare attic; but sunny, and scrupulously neat and clean: on the walls a few good prints, a hanging book-case packed with classics, some canvases with their backs to us, and a student's cap stuck through with a duelling sword. There was an easel with a paint-box dangling; there were a few plain wood chairs, and a deal table covered with chintz; and that was all.

He took me to his viewpoint, showed me the twin prospects, and said how fine and how terrible it was to be so high up and so alone. Just as he was telling me that there came a knock at the door, and, when Hans had opened it, a girl came in—a student-girl whom I had noticed at the class. I smiled to myself; had he already *une petite femme*?

"Elsa, may I have the honour to present to you Mister Smith? Mister Smith, allow me to introduce you to Fraulein Kootz, a fellow-Rheinlander." His ceremonial gestures were wonderful to behold.

We bowed, and fell to talk, and Hans got ready the tea. I had the unjustifiable feeling that the lady had provided it. She was a bright, blonde-haired young creature, with a strong nose and a sensitive mouth, and she had a frank, boyish manner that was very refreshing. Apparently they were good friends, and nothing else. But certainly the sight of her made the martyrdom of Hans seem all the more extravagant.

"Try to get him out to see Paris, Mr. Smith," she urged me. "He mopes in his hole up here; shuts the door on his friends, and won't come to see them."

Hans laughed gaily.

"Paris doesn't want me to see her, and I don't always want to see my friends. Women, the best of them,"

he said, turning to me, "cannot understand that men may like sometimes to be alone."

"Sometimes! You are a hermit, an owl, a monster! Why, he sits up here for days together, Mr. Smith, with a locked door, brooding and brooding. The silly fellow!"

Hans grunted. It was plain the lady would love him if he let her. But would he? I felt, and I was sure she felt, there was no chance of it.

Fraulein Kootz and I went down the stairs together. Suppressed emotion, I suppose it was, gave a certain tenderness to her farewell greeting as she turned into her room. It is queer being a proxy in love. I made bold to ask her to come to see me. Walking down the hill, I wondered why it was I was so glad she had consented.

I got Hans out and about Paris, as I had promised Elsa Kootz. Sometimes we went all three together, sculling on the Seine. Sometimes he failed us at the last moment, and we two had to make the excursion without him. Elsa came, now and then, to our drinking parties—much to the discomfiture of Allmann and the disgust of Sami, for Sami did not approve of the *honnête femme*. Randall liked her. She always left early, and dragged away the poor Hans as an escort home.

Yet, for all his excursions and his merrymaking, Hans remained as melancholic and as hopeless as ever. Sometimes for an hour the mood lifted, but only to settle on him the blacker. Not that he vaunted his distress; it showed in his eye, and his lip, and his nervous hands. He still slaved at the class and in his attic, and still quite without a shadow of success.

* * * *

It appeared from the placards on the street column that there was to be a great revolutionary meeting. Randall and I are revolutionaries, and we determined

to go. Jaurés was to speak, and Pressensé, and Jean Allmaine, and a lot more. Sami came to see the fun, and we dragged Hans with us.

You know what revolutionary meetings are! You get wildly enthusiastic, and then go quietly home; that is, you go away quietly if the *gendarmes* will let you. Well, this occasion was typical. We clapped and shouted and stamped and cried *A Bas* this and *Vive* that, and *Conspuez* something else, and a lot more. Sami had a rollicking time.

But the speeches and the atmosphere affected Hans strangely. I happened to look at him while Jaurés was speaking. When the great little orator had got up, Hans had muttered, "Ugh! the fat bourgeois." But now he was listening tensely. His face was quite white; his eyes, fixed on the speaker ramping up and down the platform, were wide open; his lips were parted. And every now and then his lips twitched, and his body shook. When the speech was over, he did not join in the applause, but still gazed before him with wide-open eyes. And so he stood and stared till the end of the meeting, when the singing of the International carried him off his feet as on a tidal wave. He knew nor words nor tune; but he joined in, singing in a hoarse high-pitched voice, his eyes and his face on fire. . . . He walked with us to the entrance, staggering like a drunken man.

On the steps we were pulled up short by a line of *gendarmes*. There were more *gendarmes*, on horseback, capering through the dense crowd in the street, striking viciously here and there with the flat of their sabres.

One *gendarme* had placed a large hand on Sami's stomach. Sami looked down with mild surprise.

"*Qu'est que c'est que ça ?*" he asked.

"*Ça ne fait rien, mon vieux !*" I cried, slapping him on the shoulder, "*c'est pour la santé !*" And the three of us laughed.

But Hans blazed.

"What!" he screamed in German, shaking his fists in the faces of the *gendarmes*. "Do you think we are dogs or cattle, that you herd us and drive us so? May the Lord God curse you, you brutal cowards!"

If his words were heard, they were not understood, but his gesture was unmistakeable. A *gendarme* laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Little idiot!" muttered Randall, and pushed me in the ribs; and, as the guarding line broke up to let another hundred sheep into the street, we formed round Hans and rushed him away. A mounted man made towards us; we elbowed violently through the crowd, dived into a side-street, and got clear.

"Well, young man," said Randall to Hans, as we sat drinking coffee on the Boule Miche, "I like your courage, but I don't think much of your sense."

Hans smiled; his glass was clattering against his teeth as he drank, but he looked radiantly happy.

* * * *

And this is almost all there is to tell. You have not heard of Hans Biebermeyer, because that is not his name; but you have probably read some of his speeches, delivered in the Reichstag. Elsa says she always knew he would be a great man.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE OTHER ME.

Before the Harrisburg Town Hall, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., stretch two long parallel lines of statuary. Here Strength carries a wounded brother. Here Love touches a man and a maid. Here walk two comrades. Here is the eternal family group—father, mother and child. Here the prodigal kneels repentant. . . . Old symbols, somewhat too obvious for decadent modern palates !

Pay special attention, an it please you, to two of the figures in this gigantic procession (thirty-three figures, over life-size), to this father of family with his wife on one arm and his child on the other (how sheepishly benevolent he looks !) and to this husband or lover (lover you would judge from the trouble he takes) bending down to kiss the back of the thick-tressed head he seeks to hold in his hands !

These are Barnard's special pride. Nothing else in the composition, he will tell you, has come out quite so well. Yes, here the artist has excelled himself. Notice only the delicate lines, the harmonious proportions, the discreet yet athletic musculature, the poised rhythmic movement, the subtle flood of atmosphere that envelops the surface ! What do you think of them ? Are they not fine ?

Friends, readers, countrymen, they are I ; I, ladies and gentlemen—I who write these lines, I who trapse the dirty pavement of Fleet Street this dull spring day in pseudo-cylindrical garments of a doubtful age and hue—I am those slender figures of white marble glistening in the sun. . . .

* * * *

Century after century through all the years of the American future I shall smile and bend there. Harvard professors will praise my Greek repose ; Japanese professors (pince-nezed and almond-eyed) will take me for a pure example of the early American type—though Limehouse light first saw me ; excited publicists will rush by me at full gabble ; festal days will see me garlanded and bedraped—this last not only on festal days, if the little draper of Harrisburg shall have his will ; revolutions will surge round me, bosses rise and fall, Roosevelts rocket and blaze and fade, while I smirk on with that stupid paternal smile, and reach down with crooked knees and terrible torsial twist to those unattainable marble tresses. It is queer and awful, this frozen immortality.

Of course there are others, thirty-one others, flies caught in the amber, fixed in one laugh, one groan, one glance of love. But what would you ? a poet must select things to be wondered at. And, after all, those others are not so wonder-worthy. Mere professionals, I assure you, with all the race and individual tang boiled out of them. Whereas we (I and the other), are portrait pieces. And, yes, I cannot get over the fact that it is I, I who touch myself with this finger, who will look down on all those tremendous cycles. . . .

Twice a sculptor in a studio had a vision, and knew me for what I was, and shaped his knowledge in the plastic clay. And then the moulder came and slapped wet plaster over me, and waited, and then opened the mould, and cut away my clay body from the shell ; and then

slapped more plaster into the mould, and waited ; and then clipped away the shell, and out I came from my tomb, white and ghastly. And after that the sculptor's men fixed lines and laths round me, and measured, and shaped me anew, greater, a huge grey image ; and once again the plaster tomb enclosed me, and I came out from my chrysalis huge and white and terrible.

These things with my own eyes I saw, and how the sculptor with his cruel weapons lovingly cut away the roughnesses that were not I.—

And how they put me in a machine with a marble block beside me, and how fierce drills bored their way into the marble, and how unknown workmen cut and cut, until, lo ! there at my shoulder was a rough-hewn creature marked over with tiny drill-points like a weather-worn stone ; and how at last the artist tore away this cloak, and there I stood, his thought, revealed !

A moment's monument to last for ever !

* * * *

My friends, those silent marble figures are more truly I than this clumsy fellow that utters banal witticisms, and says " Good morning ! " and " Pass the bread and butter ! "

They are I ; and yet—the pity of it !—I cannot put my consciousness inside. These, and my consciousness—an unbridged gulf is between us. Some day we three may join, perhaps—I and my marble selves, they pass into me or I into them ; some day, perhaps, who can tell ? . . .

If only it could be so ! If I could look out of those eyes, and see how it will come about, this fascinating unknown future ! watch all those little threads of thought and action, which I and a million others have helped to weave, twist and grow into a new pattern ! I am mad with curiosity to know how it will all turn out.

What of the world would you see, I wonder, from the

fringe of the steps before the Harrisburg Town Hall, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. ? How many days, years, centuries, cycles, would it take to piece the puzzle together ! To understand the implications of the figures passing up and down, to deduce from the evolution in Senators' headgear the meaning of the process of the stars ? Strange misapprehensions you would arrive at ! And yet, I fancy, in the end you would find a better knowledge by remaining thus fixed and serene than by any amount of



frantic globe-trotting—your little moment of striving done with, to look on serenely for ever, and watch the august ridiculous pageant move by. Would you get tired of watching ? . . .

Hurried, boisterous, and vulgar at first, decade after decade men will grow more serene. The nervous twitch will pass. Stronger and stronger, more and more harmonious, more and more diverse they will become. . . . An infinitude of splendid virile types, an endless pro-

cession of beauty throngs my stairway. . . . Until one stops, and here another, to marvel that they sprang from creatures so ugly and so poor as we. (And that is a thought I laugh at when I dream of may solitary dances in the days when the statues were made.)

* * * *

Comrades, it is night, and the good Americans are snoring, or getting drunk in bars. Now comes our freedom.

"*C'est l'heure !*" cries the moon, looking round the earth at the sun ; and then, with a clumsy bend and a creak and an argot curse at the pose, we climb down from the stand, and start chattering, just as we did in the old days at Julian's, or Collarossi's, or the Beaux Arts. But dimly, very dimly do they remember their pasts, these creatures that the sculptor has so changed. Almost has the prodigal son forgotten those unsaleable water-colours that he once hawked through the grand cafés ; as an idle tale that is told in the memory of his blind eyes and wise pioneer dog to the prodigal father ; Eve smiles unbelievably at this phantom picture of her shabby little room near the Cemetery of Montparnasse, at this ghost of the taste of the vile coffee and splendid rice cake of the Rue de Four, Another spirit has passed into them. They move slowly, theatrically, solemn spectres in the moonlight, spouting Miltonic blank verse with a slight American accent.

And we two others with our memories wander apart, looking in each other's eyes with the glance of knowledge, and dancing hand in hand the dance of eternal youth as we did in the old days, the days when the statues were made.

EPILOGUE.

I

Oh I'm Barnard's man with the corkscrewy torso,
His young blooming husband is me, only more so,
And I'm Father Time riding post on the Earth
In the nebulous manner the moderns adore so.

2

And Gilbey's fine statue was done from my figure,
Though he's put in the hands and the feet rather bigger,
And Randall's symphonical portrait in C,
With the brown coat and trimmings was founded on me,
And I am the man with the angular backbone
Who's looking in doubt at the girl on his knee.

3

Vegetarian Cain, with the mark of the damn'd on him,
Sir Galahad rampant with Wardour Street crammed on
him,
Judge Paris, who holds out a succulent pippin
To three ladies, half veiled in thin drapes which are
slippin'.

4

A bowman—the arrow drawn back to the shoulder,
 Shy youth whom a young maiden tempts to be bolder,
 A Louis-Quinze lord making eyes at a dame
 Who is blushing a smile at the tale he's just told her.



5

As a priest—or a pirate—a satyr—a saint,
 Ironical, solemn, harmonious, quaint,
 In galleries scattered all over the planet,
 I am cut into copper and marble and granite,
 I am pictured in pencil and pastelle and paint.

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